

Bonus section: Quick dinners inspired by the farmers' market

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FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO COOK

SEPTEMBER 2007 NO. 87

how to grill the juiciest chicken

no-cook
tomato sauce

new ideas
for corn
off the cob

a Mexican
take on steak

perfecting
grilled bread

3 easy peach
desserts

dressing up
grilled
eggplant

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Thighs with Sweet & Sour
Orange Dipping Sauce



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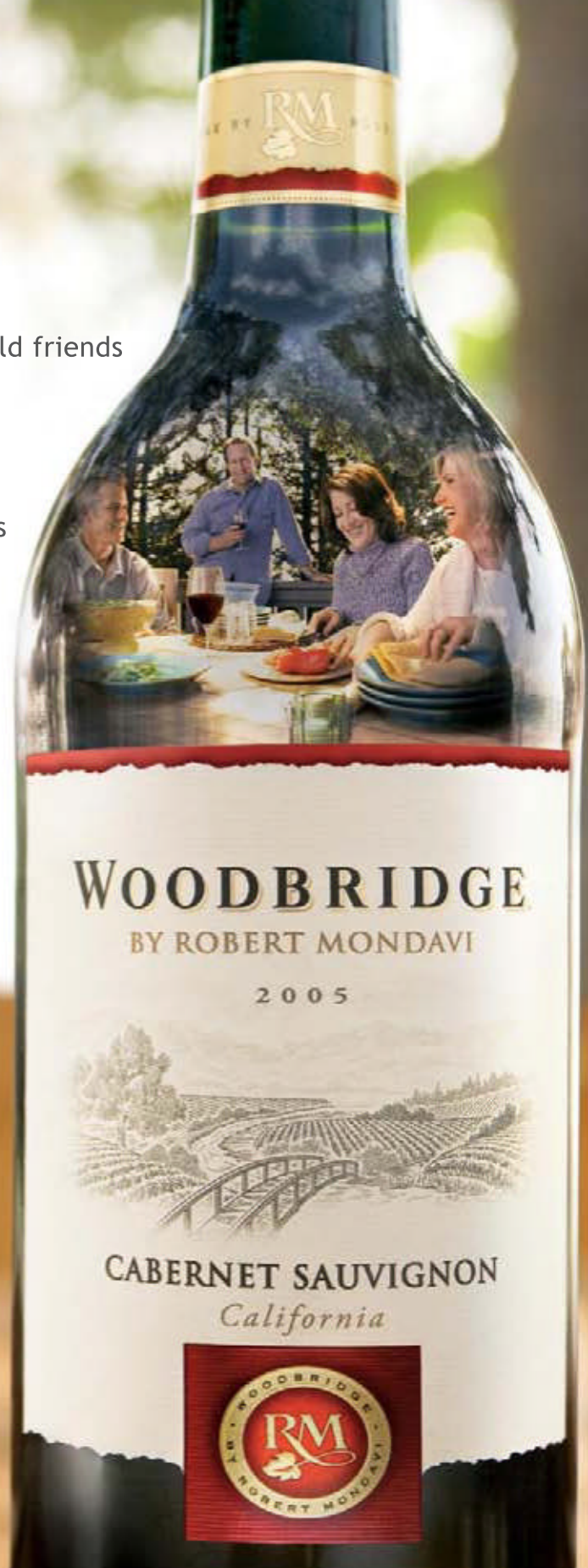


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1 bottle of



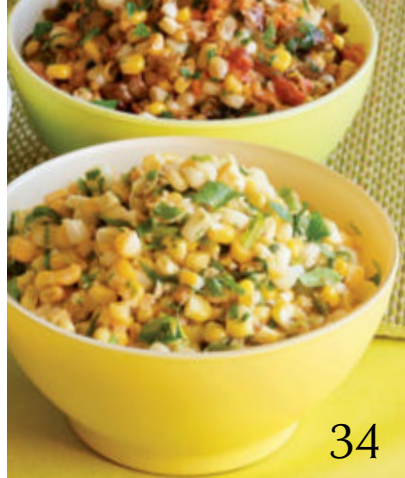
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MAKE EVERY DAY A LITTLE LESS EVERYDAY

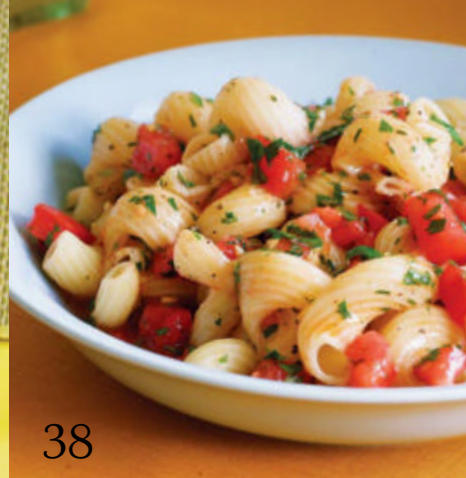
WOODBIDGE.
BY ROBERT MONDAVI

fine Cooking®

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2007 ISSUE 87



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RECIPE FOLDOUT

78A Quick & Delicious Summertime, and the cooking is easy



Farmers' Market Quesadillas

ON THE COVER

30 Chicken Thighs on the Grill



*Grilled Rosemary Chicken Thighs with
Sweet & Sour Orange Dipping Sauce*

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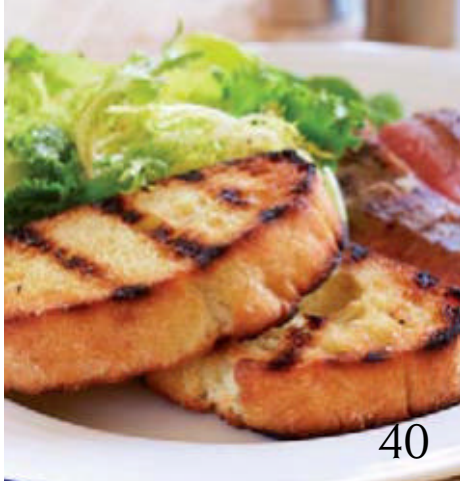


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BACK COVER

Make It Tonight

Corn Sauté with Canadian Bacon, Potatoes & Peppers



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- ◆ QUICK
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ MAKE AHEAD
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ VEGETARIAN
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients



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Simple meals for late summer's harvest

This is the time of year when a cook's job becomes infinitely easier. The arrival of fabulous fruits and vegetables in gardens and markets provides plenty of inspiration for meals that showcase the season's harvest. In this issue, we offer an abundance of recipes to help you make the most of the tomatoes, eggplant, corn, peaches, and other fresh ingredients reaching their peak. The menu ideas here also recognize that as summer winds down, most of us still want to eat lightly and squeeze in as many outdoor meals as possible. As a result, you won't find many dishes requiring stewing or braising. Now is the time for quick stovetop cooking and outdoor grilling, so you can get out of the kitchen and enjoy the last of the warm weather. Remember to check the yield on each recipe, as you may need to double or halve it to suit your needs.

Three ideas for a weekend lunch on the deck

Pair a hearty soup with a fresh starter or salad for a satisfying midday meal.

**Grilled Goat Cheese Crostini with
Marinated Roasted Peppers**, p. 42

**Summer Bouillabaisse with
Smoky Rouille**, p. 78a

To drink: A light fruity red that can be served slightly chilled, like the 2005 Beringer Founders' Estate Pinot Noir, California, \$12

**Feta & Dill Galette with Lemony
Spinach Salad**, p. 78a

**Summer Corn Chowder with
Scallions, Bacon & Potatoes**, p. 55

To drink: A citrusy Sauvignon Blanc like the 2006 Souverain, Alexander Valley, \$15

Green Gazpacho, p. 19

**Grilled Corn, Shrimp
& Chorizo Salad**, p. 43

To drink: A vibrant Italian Pinot Grigio like the 2005 Alois Lageder, Delle Venezie, \$16

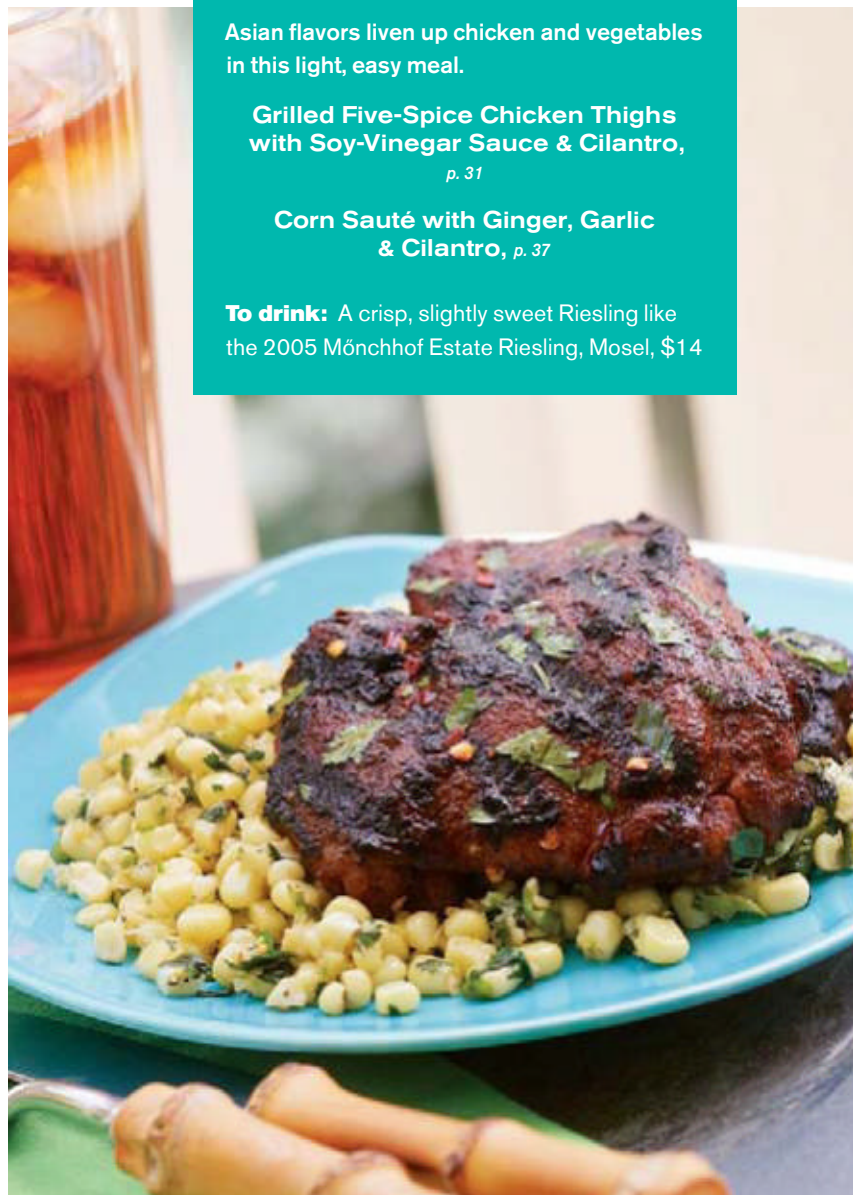
Easy Ways with Asian Flavors

Asian flavors liven up chicken and vegetables in this light, easy meal.

**Grilled Five-Spice Chicken Thighs
with Soy-Vinegar Sauce & Cilantro**,
p. 31

**Corn Sauté with Ginger, Garlic
& Cilantro**, p. 37

To drink: A crisp, slightly sweet Riesling like the 2005 Mönchhof Estate Riesling, Mosel, \$14



Cool foods for a hot night

Leave the stove off for
this make-ahead meal.

**No-Cook Tomato
Sauce with
Basil Pesto
over pasta of your
choice**, p. 39

**Arugula Salad with
Pears, Prosciutto &
Aged Gouda**, p. 78a

**Peaches & Cream
Parfait**, p. 60

To drink: An herbal
crisp white like the 2006
Allan Scott Marlborough
Sauvignon Blanc, New
Zealand, \$16

Put it on the grill

This no-fuss meal lets
you stay outside with
guests. Be sure to
marinate the flank steak
at least four hours ahead.

Grilled Garlic Bread,
p. 41

**Grilled Flank Steak
with Sesame Sauce
& Grilled Scallions**,
p. 53

**Grilled Eggplant
with Toasted-
Breadcrumb
Salsa Verde**, p. 50

**Peaches & Cream
Dessert**, p. 59

To drink: A young fruit-
forward red like the 2005
Rosemount Estate Shiraz
Cabernet, Southeastern
Australia, \$10

Casual summer suppers

Both the chicken and the eggplant in these two
meals can be grilled ahead of time and served
at room temperature.

**Corn, Sweet Onion &
Zucchini Sauté with
Fresh Mint**, p. 36

**Grilled Rosemary
Chicken Thighs
with Sweet & Sour
Dipping Sauce**, p. 32

To drink: A youthful red
like the 2005 Red Guitar
Tempranillo Garnacha,
Navarra, Spain, \$14

**Grilled Eggplant
with Garlic-Cumin
Vinaigrette, Feta
& Herbs**, p. 51

**Angel Hair Pasta
with Sautéed Cherry
Tomatoes, Lemon
& Tuna**, p. 78a

To drink: A zesty rosé
like the 2005 Falesco
Vitiano Rosé, Italy, \$12



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from the editor

The Thrill of the Shoot

The life of a magazine editor is oh-so-glamorous, especially when it comes to photo shoots. You have only to look at me turned upside down scrubbing a patio table (top left) to see how true this is. Cover shoots are particularly exciting. We spend a lot of time in hurry-up-and-wait mode. People get tired, cranky, and hungry (we can't eat the prop food, and we often forget to order lunch). Our photographer, Scott (top right), is constantly reminding us that we're "burning daylight," and we drive our food stylist, Allison (at the grill), absolutely nuts asking her to fluff up a piece of frisée one more time. Our art director, Annie (in pink), always finds that there's one key prop (the one she picked out to add just the right shot of color to the cover) that didn't make it from the office to our location. And everybody gets annoyed at the editor (me), because I never seem to like the props, the light, the food—or something. (That's why they try to distract me by asking folks back at the office to call me during the shoot.)

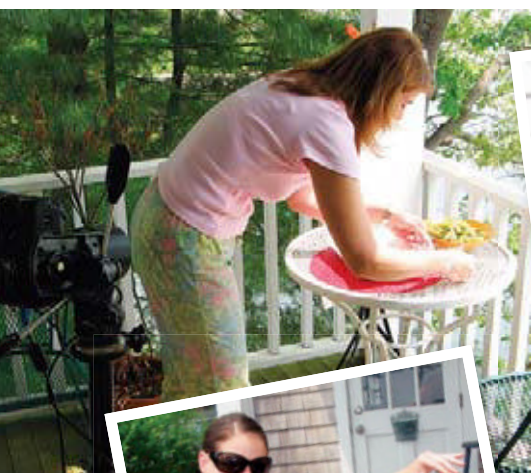
All kidding aside, every cover shoot has its challenges, but we always feel good at the end of the day when we get something beautiful. We were particularly happy with the grilled chicken kebab shot we did for this cover. It just looks iconically delicious.

The photos shown here were taken that day; the location was my house, where we often shoot covers because of the abundance of natural light. (Plus, we have the added companionship of Gus and Scout, who like to wiggle their way into photos.)

We took these behind-the-scenes shots because I thought it would be fun to write about a shoot on our new editors' blog, *The Kitchen Sink*, which you can find at FineCooking.com. (If you go to the site, a link to the blog is on the home page.)

I'm excited about the blog because we'll get a chance to show you a little bit of what goes into making the magazine (including reports from the test kitchen). We'll also get to share with you new restaurants, favorite markets, new recipes, and great foodie destinations. We'll post our favorite new equipment and ingredient finds, and we'll review a book or two. And we'll probably let you know what we're cooking at home from time to time. The best part is that you can log on and comment on any of these blogs, so it will help us get to know you a little better, too. Let us know what's cooking at your house; we hope it's chicken thighs, grilled bread, peach desserts, or something else yummy from this issue.

—Susie Middleton, editor





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White Chocolate Crème Anglaise

Serves 8

Chocolat fondant:

Butter, softened
Flour
8oz dark chocolate fondente
8oz butter
5 eggs
5 egg yolks
2.8oz sugar
3.5oz sifted all-purpose flour

White chocolate crème anglaise:

1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup double cream
6 egg yolks
2.8oz sugar
2oz white chocolate, chopped or grated
Raspberries for garnish

Preheat oven to 170°C.

Chocolate fondant:

Butter the insides of 8 ramekins or dariole moulds, and sprinkle with a little flour.

Melt the dark chocolate in a bain marie, then fold in the butter.

Beat together the eggs, egg yolks and sugar until pale. Combine with the melted chocolate, then fold in the sifted flour. Divide the mixture equally between the moulds. Set aside.

White chocolate crème anglaise:

Warm the milk and cream in a saucepan. In a separate bowl, beat together the egg yolks and sugar until smooth and pale.

Gradually add the milk and cream to the eggs, stirring constantly. Pour the custard back into the saucepan and stir over a low heat until it thickens.

Place the white chocolate in a bowl, and add the custard, stirring until the chocolate melts. Strain and cool.

Place the ramekins in the oven and bake for 7-10 minutes, until the outside is set, but the inside is still liquid.

To serve: Turn the chocolate fondants out onto plates, and decorate with the white chocolate crème anglaise and raspberries.

from our readers

A sharp alternative

I found the article on knife sharpeners in the April/May 2007 issue (*Fine Cooking* #85) very interesting. I wanted to let you know of another option I recently discovered and like. It's the Gatco knife-sharpening kit. (Gatco is an American company based in Getzville, New York, whose full name is Great American Tool Company.) The regular version, which I have, comes with three stones—coarse, medium, and fine—together with a clamping device that holds the knife and stones, and a bottle of honing oil. The clamping device makes it possible to sharpen angles from 11 to 29 degrees. It sounds complicated, but I have found it easy to use. There is also a version that includes a very coarse stone and a honing stone for serrated knives. I found my kit at a Canadian store that specializes in fine tools.

—Charles B. Chapman, London, Ontario

Of cookouts, cats, and convenience

I'm writing with three comments. First, the Grilled Asparagus & Onions with Balsamic Vinegar & Blue Cheese recipe in the pullout "Grilling for a Crowd" in *Fine Cooking* #86 (June/July 2007) was devoured with great reviews at a potluck cookout last night. I knew the minute I saw the recipe that it was going to be wonderful. I used fat asparagus and found they handled the grilling much better than the thinner ones I usually buy. They can afford to lose moisture on the grill, and their flavor intensifies.

I also loved reading the editor's letter, "Inside Out," about how her dogs are always on the wrong side of the door. It reminded me of how well our cats have trained us. We don't have an ocean breeze to keep the bugs away, but we do like to keep the sliding door open, with only the screen door closed. Our impatient kitties would scratch a hole in the lower corner of the screen in their constant desire to be in or out. We found ourselves repeatedly replacing the screen. Finally we saw the wisdom of our cats and cut an L-shaped slit in the corner of the screen, creating a flap that allowed the felines to come and go at will. It's far less unsightly than a mangled screen and does a surprisingly good job at keeping the winged bugs out.

Finally, I really wish you offered your recipes online. I tend to shop based on what looks good when I'm in the grocery store,

thus I like to copy my favorite recipes into my Palm so that the ingredient list is always available for shopping. If you offered the recipes to subscribers, I would definitely subscribe to the magazine. Not only that, I would be willing to pay extra to download recipes.

—Cynthia Kammann, Baltimore, Maryland

Editors' reply: We do, in fact, already have part of our recipe archive available online at FineCooking.com. Since last year, we've been steadily adding to that archive, and we recently introduced a feature that lets you save your favorite recipes to a personal file. And this fall, we'll be launching a subscription-based site that will offer complete access to our recipe archives, along with several other interactive features. So please stay tuned.

A cook is born

I'm a senior at Fairfield University in Connecticut. Recently, after a morning and afternoon of watching the Food Network, I got inspired to take a trip to the grocery store and cook up something delicious for dinner. I headed for the magazine section and came across the April/May 2007 issue of *Fine Cooking* (#85). I thumbed through and saw recipes that made my mouth water. I also noticed that the ingredients were familiar, and I knew I could use the same things for a bunch of recipes.

I came home and cooked the New Potatoes with Butter, Shallots & Chervil; the Roasted Asparagus with Lemon & Olive Oil; and the Maple Pan-Roasted Baby Carrots. The recipes were easy to follow, and I have to tell you, this was one of the best meals I have had in my 22 years. I was so proud and happy after making it, and the great thing is, I have enough leftover ingredients to prepare the same dishes or try some new recipes.

The suggestions for wine were extremely helpful as well, especially since I'm unsure of what would best be paired with specific flavors. I'm so happy that I found the magazine, and I will definitely keep the recipes for future dishes. Thank you so much. It made me want to experiment with cooking more.

—Ioanna Psaroudakis, via email ♦

C^{fine} Cooking

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Fine Cooking: (ISSN: 1072-5121) is published seven times a year by The Taunton Press, Inc., Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Telephone 203-426-8171. Periodicals postage paid at Newtown, CT 06470 and at additional mailing offices. GST paid registration #123210981.

Subscription Rates: U.S. and Canada, \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years, \$69.95 for three years (GST included, payable in U.S. funds). Outside the U.S./Canada: \$36 for one year, \$62 for two years, \$88 for three years (payable in U.S. funds). Single copy, \$6.95. Single copy outside the U.S., \$7.95.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Fine Cooking*, The Taunton Press, Inc., 63 South Main St., P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

Canada Post: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *Fine Cooking*, c/o Worldwide Mailers, Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7, or email to mnfa@taunton.com.

Printed in the USA.

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www.finecooking.com

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Contributing editor **Pam Anderson** ("Chicken Thighs," p. 30) is the author of *Perfect Recipes for Having People Over*. Her newest book, *The Perfect Recipe for Losing Weight and Eating Great—Change Your Life for Good*, will be published next spring. She teaches cooking classes nationally and is the food columnist for *USA Weekend* magazine.

While **Susie Middleton** ("Corn Sautés," p. 34) has never met a vegetable she didn't like, she does have a few favorites, and in-season corn is one of them. As editor of *Fine Cooking*, Susie oversees the magazine, its Web site, and special issues. Still, she's not above tackling less cerebral tasks when necessary, as you can see in one of the photos on p. 10.



Elizabeth Karmel

Evan Kleiman ("No-Cook Tomato Sauce," p. 38) fell in love with Italy's cuisine during her many trips to that country when she was a student of Italian literature and film. Now owner of Angeli Caffè in Los Angeles, she is also the author of six cookbooks, including *Cucina Fresca* and *Pasta Fresca*, and the host of Good Food, a weekly radio show on KCRW, Santa Monica's NPR station.



Tashia DeSerio

The author of *Taming the Flame*, **Elizabeth Karmel** ("Grilled Bread," p. 40) teaches across the country and runs her company, Girls at the Grill. She is also the executive chef at Hill Country, a new Texas barbecue restaurant in New York City, and the head counselor for Camp BBQ, a barbecue camp for adults.



Nancie McDermott

Jim Peyton ("Steak, Mexican Style," p. 44) has studied Mexican cuisine for more than 30 years and has written three books on the

subject, including *Jim Peyton's New Cooking from Old Mexico*. He also runs the Web site LoMexicano.com, which features recipes, cooking information, and Mexican cooking ingredients.

When it comes to eggplant, **Tasha DeSerio** ("Grilled Eggplant," p. 48) believes that simple preparations help this hearty vegetable shine. "I wanted to replace the associations most people have of eggplant being heavy or greasy," she says. Now a caterer and cooking teacher, Tasha cooked for five years at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California.

Contributing editor **Tony Rosenfeld** ("Scallions," p. 52) co-owns a growing empire of healthful fast-food restaurants in the Boston area called b.good and is about to open Dinner Trends, a menu-assembly kitchen where customers put together meals to take home from pre-prepped ingredients. Tony's first cookbook, *150 Things to Make with Roast Chicken*, was published last spring.

Nancie McDermott ("Thai Seafood Salad," p. 56) became interested in Asian cuisine as a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand. She is the author of *Real Thai*, *Real Vegetarian Thai*, and *Quick & Easy Thai*. Her most recent books, *300 Best Stir-Fry Recipes* and *Southern Cakes*, were published this year.

Carole Bloom ("Peaches & Cream," p. 58) has been teaching the pastry arts nationwide for more than 25 years and has written eight books and numerous articles about baking. Her latest book is *The Essential Baker: The Comprehensive Guide to Baking with Chocolate, Fruit, Nuts, Spices, and Other Ingredients*. ♦



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When I barbecue chicken, what's the best way to keep the sauce from burning?

—Selmin Cicek, Stamford, Connecticut

A Elizabeth Karmel responds: That's the No. 1 question I hear about grilling chicken. Most barbecue sauces contain a lot of sugar, and sugar burns quickly. But there are two steps you can take to keep your sauce from burning. First, grill the chicken over indirect heat (meaning no heat directly underneath the chicken). Indirect heat is the best way to get chicken that is both golden brown and caramelized on the outside and completely cooked inside. Generally, the only chicken you grill over direct heat is boneless chicken breasts, due to their quick cooking time.

The second step is to brush your chicken with barbecue sauce only during the final 10 minutes of the cooking time. It's worth noting that this practice of waiting to the end to brush on the sauce applies not just to chicken but to any meat you are grilling.

Elizabeth Karmel is the author of Taming the Flame: Secrets for Hot-and-Quick Grilling and Low-and-Slow BBQ.

How long is it safe to let cooked meat stay in the refrigerator? Are there any reliable measures besides smell and taste?

—Stephanie Rosenfeld, via email

A Michael Doyle responds: Packages of raw meat and poultry are stamped with a "use by" date, which refers to the product's peak of quality, and you should either cook or freeze it by that date. After cooking, ground meat or poultry should be eaten or thrown away within two days; whole cuts of meat or poultry can be kept three to five days once cooked. If you freeze raw meat to extend its shelf life, remember that it should be cooked as soon as it thaws.

Time is only one factor in the safety of raw meat, though—the others are temperature and handling. If

meat is kept at unsafe temperatures or mishandled, foodborne bacteria can grow on it before the "use by" date on the package. The proper temperature for storing raw and cooked meat is 40°F or below, which will prevent bacteria from growing, though not kill any that already exists. Potential mishandling includes cooked meat that has been left out at room temperature for more than two hours, products that have been defrosted at room temperature for more than two hours, and cross contamination from other raw meats.

But how can you tell if meat has gone bad? Off odors and flavors are obvious indicators. Color, however, isn't because some meat packers use packaging systems that preserve color. So the most reliable indicator of freshness is still the "sell by" or "use by" date.

Dr. Michael Doyle is director for food safety at the University of Georgia.

Can you suggest a vegetarian alternative to gelatin?

—Samantha Pembroke, St. Louis, Missouri

A Eric Tucker responds: Gelatin is a protein made from animal bones, skins, and cartilage. Of the vegetarian alternatives available, the one I like best is agar-agar, which is derived from red sea algae. I use it in all kinds of custards, icings, and cheesecakes, as well as in a decadent vegetarian pâté. Flavorless and colorless, agar-agar comes in powder, flake, or stick form and can be found at health-food stores or Asian markets. The most widely available and consistent brand I've found is Eden Foods.

Agar-agar and gelatin behave differently in a couple of ways. Agar-agar, which usually sets up stiffer than gelatin, will set up and remain solid at room temperature. Gelatin, on the other hand, needs refrigeration to set up and will eventually melt at room temperature.

The two are similar in that you have to melt agar in a hot liquid (above 140°F), as you do with gelatin. And agar's gelling properties, like gelatin's, are sensitive to acids (vinegar and citrus), so depending on the concentration of acids you may need more dried agar-agar.

Eric Tucker is the executive chef at the vegetarian Millennium restaurant in San Francisco and co-author of the cookbook The Artful Vegan. ♦

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fcqa@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

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Cool off with
refreshing

Cucumbers

BY RUTH LIVELY

Cool, crisp, and juicy, cucumbers are always a welcome addition to my summer kitchen. When the temperature soars above 80°F, I find few things as refreshing as a snack of raw cukes with a tangy, savory dip. They're also ideal for chilled soups (see my Green Gazpacho at far right), and they add a bright, fresh note to any number of salads.

Cucumbers' mild, sweet flavor makes them a good match for almost anything. I like to pair them with onions, tomatoes, peppers, and any summery herb, as well as with fish and shellfish, chicken, pork, and lamb. Creamy dairy products like yogurt, cream cheese, sour cream, feta, and goat cheese give them richness and a welcome tang, while aromatics like capers, olives, garlic, lemon, and lime add a little punch.

Firmness is your best clue to freshness when shopping for cucumbers. Avoid limp or shriveled ones. I also look for fruits that seem slender for their size. This means they're younger, so chances are they'll have either undeveloped or fewer seeds. Store

cucumbers in the crisper drawer, loose or in an open plastic bag, and use them within three or four days of buying. Kept longer, they'll get slimy on the outside and mushy inside.

Peeling and seeding are not always necessary. When prepping cucumbers, some cooks remove the seeds as a matter of course. But if they're tiny and cling tight to the flesh, you can leave them. It's only when they're fully developed that they become intrusive and unpleasant to eat and should be removed. To do this, cut the cucumber in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds with a spoon or a melon baller. Whether to peel cucumbers or not depends on how you intend to cut them. Most cucumbers have thick, tough skins, so if you're cutting them in big chunks, it's best to peel them. If you're slicing them thinly, the skins are more palatable—and prettier—so you can leave them on. Cucumbers with naturally thin, tender skins, like the English variety (see sidebar at right), don't need peeling.

A world of cucumbers

There are dozens of cucumber varieties, all of which can be used pretty much interchangeably. Here are some of the most common types available:

1. Picklers

Picklers are short and blocky, with blunt ends and bumpy skins. Their firm texture makes them perfect for pickling, but you can use them raw as well.

2. Slicers

Slicers are your basic, all-purpose cucumbers. They're about 8 inches long with round ends and smooth to slightly knobby dark-green skin. The ones you buy at the supermarket are often waxed to protect them during shipping and to extend their shelf life. Scrub them well or peel before using.

3. English

Also known as greenhouse, European, or seedless cucumbers, English cucumbers are 10 to 12 inches long and slender and are usually sold in plastic sleeves. With their thin skins, undeveloped seeds, and uniform shape, they are ideal for slicing into salads and garnishing appetizers.

Quick ideas for raw cukes

I don't usually cook cucumbers. To me, it's the crunchy texture and fresh flavor of raw cucumbers that's most appealing. Here are some of my favorite ways to use them:

Whip up a zippy garnish for grilled meats.

Stir thinly sliced cucumbers and chopped shallots with plain Greek yogurt and lots of chopped herbs.

Make a bread salad. Combine chopped cucumbers, tomatoes, sweet pepper, and onion with cubes of day-old artisan bread or pieces of lightly toasted pita. Add aromatics like olives, capers, or chopped preserved lemon and douse with a zesty vinaigrette.

Update tea-time cucumber sandwiches.

Spread whole-grain bread squares or pita triangles with cream cheese mixed with feta, finely chopped herbs, finely minced shallot or grated garlic, and lemon zest. Top with thin cucumber slices and watercress.

Toss together a cool Asian noodle salad.

Stir cooked rice or soba noodles with diced cucumbers and sweet pepper, chopped cilantro and basil, and a creamy peanut dressing with minced jalapeño. Garnish with chopped toasted peanuts.

Make a simple salad. Sliced cucumbers take to an impressive variety of dressings:

Drizzle with olive oil and a little lemon juice and sprinkle with salt and chopped fresh oregano.

Toss in a creamy buttermilk dressing with lots of chopped fresh dill.

Go Asian with a mix of rice vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, grated fresh ginger, and a squirt of lime juice.

Grow your own: It's easy

Cucumbers are among the easiest crops to grow. Plant the seeds directly in the ground in spring, after the soil has warmed. They sprout within days and grow quickly into vines with tendrils that wrap around whatever they touch. Although you can grow cucumbers on the ground, you'll harvest prettier, cleaner, and straighter fruits if you let them climb up some sort of trellis. Once cucumbers start bearing (usually about six weeks after planting), pick them regularly to keep production going.



Green Gazpacho

Yields a scant 6 cups; serves six.

To dress up this cold soup, serve it with lumps of cooked lobster, crab, or shrimp.

1½ lb. cucumbers (4 to 5 picklers or 2½ large slicers), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch pieces (to yield 3 cups)

1 Tbs. kosher salt; more to taste

1 large yellow pepper

1 medium ripe avocado

1 medium sweet onion, cut into 1-inch pieces (2 cups)

¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste

3 oz. fresh crustless Italian country-style bread, cut into 1-inch cubes (2 cups)

1 tsp. chopped garlic

¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

3 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh cilantro

1 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh basil or mint

⅔ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more for garnish

2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar

Put the cucumbers in a colander over a bowl or in the sink and toss with 1½ tsp. of the salt. Let them sit for 30 minutes to draw out the juices and remove any trace of bitterness. Meanwhile, core and seed the pepper and cut three-quarters of it into 1-inch pieces. Wrap the remaining quarter and refrigerate; you'll need it later. Cut the avocado in half, peel one half,

and cut it into 1-inch chunks.

Lightly coat the cut surface of the remaining half with oil, wrap it in plastic, and refrigerate for later.

Rinse and drain the cucumber. Put the cucumber, pepper, avocado, onion, the remaining 1½ tsp. salt, and the pepper in a food processor and purée.

Transfer the purée to a large bowl and reassemble the processor. Process the bread, garlic, and herbs until the bread is reduced to crumbs and the herbs are fully chopped. Add the oil and vinegar to the mixture and process briefly to thoroughly combine. Add the bread mixture and 1 cup water to the cucumber purée and stir until well blended. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or overnight. Let come to a cool room temperature before serving.

When ready to serve, peel the reserved avocado half and cut it into ½-inch dice. Cut the reserved pepper into ¼-inch dice. Stir the soup and assess its consistency. If it seems too thick, add water until it's thinned to your liking. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide the soup among shallow bowls and garnish with the avocado and pepper. Drizzle about 1 tsp. of olive oil over each bowl and serve.

Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

Beer 101

In the dog days of summer, cold beer can be the perfect match for food—here's an overview of your options

BY TIM GAISER

While just a few years ago it would have been unthinkable to see beer pairings on the menu of a nice restaurant, these days more than a few chefs and sommeliers believe that beer works just as well as wine with food—and sometimes better. I'm not talking about the mass-produced lagers favored by armchair quarterbacks but about high-quality and intriguing craft beers. Some are produced only in small quantities, while others are widely available, but many are exceptionally food-friendly—particularly in summer when we want something cool

and refreshing to go with our meals.

But as with wine, there are so many different styles of beer that choosing the right one can be daunting. This article will help you sort through your options and find the right beer for what's on your menu.

What's the ideal temperature for serving beer?

As with wine, be careful not to serve beer too cold. An overly chilled beer will have little aroma and flavor. Instead, serve lighter lagers between 48° and 52°F, lighter ales at 54° to 58°F, and richer ales and lagers at 57° to 65°F.

How do you store beer?

Although few beers get better with aging, it's still important to store them properly, keeping them away from excessive heat, temperature fluctuations, and light. Good storage conditions would provide a constant temperature of between 55° and 60°F without light or vibration (itself a source of heat).

Types of beer

Most beers fall into one of two categories—ales and lagers—based on the kind of yeast used for fermentation.

Ales

Ales are made with top-fermenting yeasts, strains of yeast that rise to the surface during fermentation, creating a thick yeast head. Ales have a distinctive fruitiness, which is offset by the addition of bitter hops, and are produced in a wide range of colors and styles. Here are some of the most common:

Pale Ales and India Pale Ales (or IPA)

Made with lightly roasted malt, these beers are golden to copper in color and relatively mild, with a distinctive bitter finish. India pale ales have a higher alcohol content and more hops, giving them a pronounced bitterness.

What to pair them with:

The crisp, citrusy notes of pale ales and IPAs pair well with a range of foods, from pizza, buffalo wings, and hamburgers to spicy Thai cuisine and Indian curries.

Brown Ales

Deep amber to brown in color, brown ales display flavors of chocolate and caramel due to the deeply roasted malts from which they're made.

What to pair them with:

Try them with hearty stews and braises as well as with aged cheeses.

Porters

Made with well-roasted malt, porter ales are deeply colored, full bodied, and richly flavored beers with bold, chocolatey notes.

What to pair them with:

Porters' deep flavor and full body are best suited to the rich flavors of stews and other hearty fare rather than to the light, bright flavors of summer.

Stouts

Exceptionally rich and creamy, these extra-dark, almost black ales are made with long-roasted malt, which gives them a caramel-like flavor.

What to pair them with:

Stouts pair well with braised meats and rich, meat-based soups or stews.



Lagers

The term lager denotes any beer made with bottom-fermenting yeasts, strains of yeast that ferment at cooler temperatures and settle to the bottom during fermentation. Lagers tend to be yellow-gold or amber in color, although there are deeper-colored versions, too. The most widespread types of lagers include:

Pilsners

Pilsners are excellent all-purpose beers with a light body, a clean, crisp flavor, and prominent hoppiness, or bitterness.

What to pair them with:

Pilsners are perfect served as an aperitif or paired with shellfish, grilled fish, or grilled or roasted chicken. They're also a great match for spicy Asian, Indian, and Middle-Eastern food.

American-style lagers and amber lagers

Pale, crisp American lagers are the most well-known and marketed beers in the United States. These clean, zesty brews have a light body and a mild flavor with just a touch of hoppy bitterness. Amber lagers are reddish brown

in color with a medium body and a caramelly malt flavor.

What to pair them with:

Both are versatile beers that pair with a range of foods, from hearty barbecue to spicy Mexican.

Bocks

Traditionally brewed in fall or early spring to coincide with festivities like Christmas and Easter, bock beers (now brewed year-round) are strong, wonderfully rich dark amber lagers.

What to pair them with:

Bocks are natural partners for hearty grill fare, such as sausages and marinated meats.

A six-pack of favorites

Six great beer picks for the summer and beyond.

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Is beer better straight from the bottle or poured into a glass?

Although there's nothing wrong with having a cold one right from the bottle, beer is always better when served in a glass. Pouring beer into a glass releases all the aromatics, just as with wine. If you're interested, you can experiment with a variety of beer-glass shapes, which can affect the tasting experience.

What's the correct pouring technique?

Hold the glass at a 45-degree angle and pour the beer slowly and evenly, gradually tilting the glass upright. You should end up with about an inch of foam as you finish pouring.

Contributing editor Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier and wine educator. ♦

what's new

Two-in-one tool



This silicone spoon/spatula from Chef'n is my new go-to tool. It has a steel core, so it's sturdy enough for mixing thick batters and soups, and the silicone means it's heat-resistant, so there are no worries when scraping rice from the bottom of a nonstick pan.

It's part of Chef'n's Switchit line of utensils, which means both ends are angled for optimum use. The narrow end works for scraping tomato paste out of the can, while the shallow spoon delivers a quick taste. And because it's silicone, it doesn't stain, is dishwasher safe, and comes in five vibrant colors. Cost is \$11, and you can buy it at ChefTools.com.



Cherry pitter contains the mess

Pitting cherries or olives can be tedious but no longer has to be as messy: OXO's new pitter has a removable splatter shield to protect your counter and clothing. It also has the soft, nonslip handles featured on all OXO Good Grips utensils. The pitter accommodates extra-large Bing cherries but also has a recessed cup to hold smaller varieties in place. The simple design works like a hole puncher, not a garlic press, so it doesn't squash the fruit. The pitter costs \$12 at Oxo.com.

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BY LISA WADDLE

An oven that does the heavy lifting

Anyone who has struggled to lift a heavy roast out of the oven or gotten burned leaning over an oven door to baste a turkey will appreciate the Lift Oven from Gaggenau. The 24-inch oven mounts on a wall, and the floor of the oven is actually the door—it lowers toward the counter and returns up with the touch of a button.

You can put breads or pizzas directly on the glass ceramic surface without a baking sheet or use a rack hooked to the rear to hold pans. Because heat rises, there's little energy loss when the oven floor is opened. The oven has 11 cooking modes, including roasting, broiling, and convection pastry.

Although smaller than most standard 27- to 30-inch ovens, the Lift Oven offers real benefits for anyone with back or arm troubles. You can order it through kitchen suppliers for about \$3,300. Go to Gaggenau-usa.com for more information.



Keeping foods fresh longer

Food vacuum-sealers are one of the bigger-ticket kitchen appliances that raise the question, Are they worth it? I gave two of the more popular versions a test run and was impressed at how easy they make it to preserve fresh vegetables, fruit, and meat. They also reduce waste from spoiled food and make buying in bulk worthwhile.

How they work: Oxygen is the reason most foods spoil or go stale, and these machines work by simply removing the excess air from heavy-duty bags or plastic containers. Both of the models I tested excelled at extending the life of refrigerated and frozen fresh fruits and vegetables. They also prevented freezer burn on raw meat and

poultry and kept cereals and cookies from going stale. I found them particularly useful at keeping refrigerator staples like hummus, lemon curd, and broth from spoiling before I could use them. Both systems also offer plastic lids that fit Mason jars, which you can then vacuum-seal. The major difference between the two is the way they operate.

FoodSaver

OPERATION: The FoodSaver is a long, heavy appliance with a flip-up lid. You raise the lid, insert the opening of a bag into the slot, and then clamp down the lid. Then you push a button for the FoodSaver to vacuum out excess air and automatically seal the bag shut by heating a strip along the opening. To vacuum-seal FoodSaver canisters, you insert a plastic tube onto the front of the appliance, hook the other end into the canister, and press a button to vacuum out the air. A light tells you when vacuuming is complete.



Pros:

It can be used to seal cereal bags, potato chip bags, and plastic bags. Available rolls of bag material let you custom-size a bag to fit oversize foods, such as big cuts of meat. Bags can be reused, although each time you open one you must cut off the top, leaving you with a smaller and smaller bag.

Cons:

Sealing the canisters requires the extra step of attaching a plastic tube to the appliance. The FoodSaver canisters are not freezer-safe so can be used only for leftovers in the fridge or for pantry staples. Several designs are available, but they all eat up quite a bit of counter space.

What's included: FoodSaver appliance, 2 canisters, 10 bags, two 10-foot rolls of bag material. Jar lid is an extra \$9.

Price: \$140 plus \$19 shipping and handling from FoodSaver.com.

VacuWare

OPERATION: Both bags and canisters are sealed by the use of a wand that attaches to the appliance. You fit the wand onto the green port on the VacuWare containers or bags, push a button, and the vacuum starts. A light goes on when all the air has been removed, and you push the button again to turn off the vacuum.



Pros:

Sealing freezer-safe canisters is simple and fast. The appliance's small footprint takes up little counter space. It comes with a small manual travel pump, which can be used at the office, in the car, or anywhere you don't have access to electricity.

Cons:

The appliance can be used only with VacuWare bags and canisters. Sealing the bags is a two-step process that requires some practice. Bags can't be reused.

What's included: FreshStation appliance, travel-size pump, 3 containers, 2 jar lids, 12 pouches.

Price: \$160, plus \$20 shipping and handling from VacuWare.com.

Bottom line

Both models performed fast and sealed well; both are also pretty loud. You'll use these more if they're in plain view, so pick a design that works with your counter space. The FoodSaver operates particularly well with bags, so choose this one if freezer storage is your goal. For keeping canisters and jars of vegetables and leftovers in the refrigerator or freezer, the VacuWare is a good choice.

Preserving the harvest

Next-generation canning jars

These marquee-shaped glass jars are a stylish update to the traditional Mason jar used for canning or pickling. Beyond looks, the new shape functions well, too: They fit together better than the traditional round jars, saving space in your canning pot and on your shelves. Made by Leifheit, the wide-mouthed jars are sold six to a package in three sizes: ½ liter (\$19), ¾ liter (\$22), and 1 liter (\$25). Safe for freezer, dishwasher, and microwave, the jars are available from SurLaTable.com.



A crinkle cut for pickles

Improving the appearance of home-made pickles is easy with the right tool. This simple Crinkle Cutter from Norpro gives cucumbers and other fruits and vegetables a scalloped edge with no more effort than cutting them with a knife. At only \$3, it's a worthy investment that you'll keep finding uses for: crudités, French fries, garnishes. You can buy it at TheKitchenStore.com.

Plastic freezing jars

Here's a new option for freezer jam fans: plastic containers from Ball. The reusable jars are made of heavy-duty plastic and are stain resistant, making them a good choice for tomato sauces, salsas, and soups. The translucent jars come with screw-on lids that lock onto the bottoms of other jars, making them easy to stack. Five 8-ounce jars come in a package for \$3 (which includes a packet of freezer jam pectin). While dishwasher safe, they are not heatproof, so you can't use them for regular canning. You can buy them at CanningPantry.com.



splurge

Ice on demand

Nothing stops a party short—especially in summer—like running out of ice. To avoid having to run out to the store, a portable ice maker, though pricey, may be just the solution. This model from Haier doesn't require any plumbing or hard-wiring, so you can plug it in nearly anywhere, even outside on the patio. It's pretty bulky—it has a footprint of 16 by 14 inches and weighs almost 50 pounds—but it makes producing and storing ice cubes in three sizes practically effortless. You fill the water tank with up to 1 gallon of water and push a button to start making cubes immediately, or program a delayed start time of up to 12 hours. In 7 to 9 minutes you have your first batch of ice. The machine stores up to 2½ pounds of ice at a time, so you and your guests can keep your cool. It costs \$192, and you can buy it at Shop.com.



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review

Ice Cream Scoops

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

Ice cream scoops are simple tools with a simple purpose, but for some reason, they don't do a very good job. Most scoops can't do better than to scrape shavings out of a pint of firmly frozen premium ice cream. Let it sit and soften and you might get a decently shaped ball of ice cream, but then it tends to stick to the scoop. Manufacturers are aware of these little nuisances, and the market is now flooded with dozens of scoops designed to address them.

We tested scoops that fell into four general styles

Trigger-release scoops feature a blade set flush against a half-sphere bowl; when you squeeze the trigger, the blade scrapes under the scooped ice cream to free it. None of the six scoops we tested in this category readily served up attractive balls of ice cream. Even more problematic, ice cream tended to freeze under the blade, limiting its movement. Softened ice cream tended to stick, no matter what. Overall, these scoops didn't impress us.

Newer to the market but similar in concept are **scoops with catapult-like levers** meant to push the ice cream straight out of the bowl. We tested four of these, plus two others made of flexible silicone that are designed to eject the ice cream when you press on the bowl itself. Like the trigger-release scoops, none of these scooped well, and often they didn't release well either, especially when the ice cream was on the soft side.

In the third category are **scoops with points**. These look as if part of the bowl has been cut away, creating two pointed corners. The points are intended to dig in and scoop ice cream with greater ease. For



The Winners

All three of these scoops are so effective that you don't even need to soften your ice cream before you dig in.

Zeroll ice cream scoops

\$16.90 for aluminum scoop
\$21.90 for nonstick scoop
 at CooksWares.com

A popular choice with professionals, these scoops transfer heat from your hand to defrosting fluid sealed inside the handle and bowl. The ice cream gently yields to the scoop, much as it does after running a scoop under hot water. The effect, however, is more consistent, and there's no hassle of repeated dipping in water. The result is beautifully rounded balls of ice cream that readily slip out of the scoop. The nonstick model has a sleeker feel, but the less-expensive aluminum model performs just as well. These scoops must be washed by hand and cannot be put in water over 140°F.

the most part, the four models we tried did scoop successfully, but the Cuisipro (far right) dug in much more easily than the others. The Cuisipro also made nice, dense balls of ice cream, and the ice cream pretty much fell out of the scoop (the nonstick surface no doubt helped).

Last, we tested **scoops that, in essence, thaw the ice cream** as you scoop. Three of the models had defrosting fluid sealed inside the bowl and handle, and one required pouring warm water into the handle. We were surprised by how well these worked, sliding slowly but smoothly into the ice cream. They warmed the ice cream just enough to ease scooping but not enough to compromise the quality of the ice cream. Of all the models, Zeroll's carved out the best scoop, making it our first choice.



Cuisipro ice cream scoop

\$13.95 at CutleryAndMore.com

The uniquely shaped bowl on this scoop allows it to dive into even the hardest ice cream (if it's rock hard, it'll take some effort, but it's manageable). Made of zinc alloy with a nonstick coating, the bowl sculpts perfect globes of ice cream and easily maneuvers around the tight corners of a pint container. The thick handle provides a comfortable grip, and the scoop is dishwasher safe. This scoop is a bit hefty, so if that's not to your liking, the lighter Zeroll might be a better fit.

How we tested

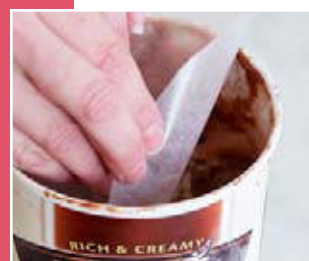
To find out how successful these “problem-solving” scoops are, we tested 22 of them under a variety of ice cream conditions—rock hard, perfectly softened, and a bit melty. Our goal was to find the scoops that could carve round, compact balls of ice cream without a struggle and release them just as easily. We scooped from rectangular half-gallon cartons and cylindrical pints.

Scooping tips

How to scoop. The more continuous and smooth the movement of the scoop, the easier it is to form an evenly shaped ball. It helps to drag the scoop around the edge of the carton rather than back and forth.

Easier entertaining. To save yourself time and trouble when serving ice cream to a crowd, scoop it ahead and store in the freezer on a chilled baking sheet or in individual bowls. Cover the ice cream well with plastic wrap.

Storing ice cream. To keep the flavor fresh and to prevent ice crystals from forming on the surface, smooth a piece of plastic wrap or waxed paper directly on the ice cream before replacing the lid. A rubber band cinched around the lid's edge will also help keep air out.



In addition to our favorite scoops shown above, we tested the following 19 scoops (listed alphabetically by category): Trigger-release scoops by Amco Housewares, Fox Run, Hamilton Beach, Oxo Good Grips, RSVP Endurance, and Zeroll; press-release scoops by Amco Housewares, Kitchen Collection, Orka/Mastrad, Oxo Good Grips, Oxo Steel, and Zack Futuro; scoops with points by KitchenAid, Oxo Good Grips, and Zyliss; and self-defrosting scoops by Fox Run and Norpro. We also tested Good Cook's twister scoop and Oxo Good Grips beak-shaped scoop.

Maryellen Driscoll is an editor at large for Fine Cooking. ♦



Winning tip

A cool way to use cast-iron pots in summer

I have a large collection of beautiful enameled cast-iron pots that I hate to put away in the summer, even though I rarely make soups or braises in hot weather. Now I've found another use for them. Cast iron retains cold as well as it does heat, so a chilled cast-iron pot turns out to be a great way to keep summer dishes cool. My homemade ice cream easily travels across town when stored and served from one of my smaller enameled cast-iron pans, and I've used the larger ones for salads and cold fruit soups. They also work well for backyard picnics. Just chill the pot in the fridge for several hours before filling.

—Rebecca Peterson, Atlanta, Georgia

A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips. We'll pay for the ones we publish, and we'll give a prize for the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email fc tips@taunton.com.

The prize for this issue's winner: Viking 5-quart stand mixer in bright red; value, \$440.



Vote Help us pick the winning reader's tip for upcoming issues; go to finecooking.com/vote



Try a meat tenderizer for docking

I was making flatbread yesterday, and the recipe called for pricking the raw dough. I don't have a pastry docker and usually just use a fork, but then I remembered a meat tenderizer hiding in a drawer. It was a huge success and worked better than a fork. I plan to use it for docking pie shells and pastry.

—Ruth Fischer, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Make anchovy paste in a garlic press

I've discovered that anchovy paste is easy to make at home. I just put a few whole anchovies in my garlic press and out comes anchovy paste, which can be mixed with a little extra-virgin olive oil for a smooth consistency.

—Louise E. Oates, Salinas, California

Car care aisle yields deep-frying help

When I deep fry, I like to reuse the oil at least once. To strain it before storing, I use a funnel designed for car oil. (It's made of HDPE plastic, which is known not to leach chemicals and is used in many food-storage containers.) Available in the automotive section of department and hardware stores, these funnels are larger than most kitchen funnels and have built-in strainers. Some even have a handy on/off spout, which helps prevent overflow. Look for a funnel with the finest wire-mesh strainer, clean it thoroughly before use, and use it only for food.

—Matthew Clemente, Kingston, Ontario

Reuse grape bags for washed greens

I buy grapes at the supermarket in perforated zip-top bags, which I've found to be perfect for storing washed greens. Because the bags allow air to circulate, the greens hold up in the refrigerator without moisture condensing in the bag.

—Judy Wong, Oakland, California

Hard cheese cleans your food processor

Whenever I shred carrots in my food processor, I'm left with an orange tinge on the plastic bowl that won't wash out easily. Pulsing a few small pieces of hard cheese like Parmigiano instantly removes the orange hue. And you have freshly chopped cheese for your salad.

—Ana Weerts, Brookfield, Wisconsin

A plastic knife for muffin removal

I use a plastic knife to remove delicate baked goods from muffin or tart tins. Plastic knives are thin and flexible, and they don't scratch the finish on my bakeware.

—Pattie Mitchell,
Nanaimo, British Columbia



A Popsicle stick measures batter level

Whenever I make anything that requires filling ramekins, I use a Popsicle stick marked off to the depth I need. For example, if I need 2 inches of filling, I use a ruler to mark 2 inches on the stick and then insert it into each ramekin while I fill it. This way, I have the same amount in each ramekin and don't have to worry about some being done before others.

—Patty Nixon, Delphos, Ohio

STAFF CORNER

Easy Parmigiano matchsticks

Most people are familiar with the technique of using a vegetable peeler to make shards of Parmigiano-Reggiano to top a dish. But if you use a julienne peeler, you get cool little matchsticks of cheese, which make a nice garnish.

—Susie Middleton, editor

Mash bananas in the peel

When making banana bread or any other recipe calling for mashed bananas, I've found a way to save a bowl. I keep the fruit in the peel and smack the banana against the counter a couple of times. Then I roll it back and forth on a flat surface, pressing down until the skin splits. Finally, I open the peel where it split, and inside is a mashed banana ready to be mixed with the other ingredients.

—Eva Reed, Castine, Maine ♦



TOO GOOD TO FORGET

From *Fine Cooking* #11



Freeze bacon to have on hand

I can rarely use a pound of bacon before its expiration date. Yet I love to cook with it, and I find that I often need a slice or two for a soup or sauce recipe. The solution? Frozen bacon, which you can quickly and easily defrost. Start with a pound of bacon. Put two or three strips on a narrow sheet of plastic wrap. Fold the wrap over to seal, and then roll into a ball. Put several of these bacon packets in a plastic freezer container for safe, fresh storage. When your recipe calls for bacon, just defrost the amount you need.

—Linda Cornwell, Wyncote, Pennsylvania

Chicken Thighs Take a Turn On the Grill

BY PAM ANDERSON

Since they started showing up in the meat case a number of years ago, boneless, skinless chicken thighs have quickly moved to the top of my favorites-to-grill list. They offer all the benefits of boneless, skinless chicken breasts—convenience and fast cooking—without the tendency to turn tasteless and dry, thanks to their slightly higher fat content. The hearty flavor of thighs and their ability to stay juicy on the grill is sure to win over anyone who claims to be dark-meat averse.

Before grilling boneless, skinless chicken thighs, you might need a quick handling tutorial. Like any chicken part, thighs come in different sizes. Thighs from mass-produced chickens tend to be larger than those from their free-range kin, so be sure to check the weight on the package.

To prepare thighs for the grill, you'll need to remove any large pockets of fat, which could cause flare-ups. Don't worry about getting every bit, as it's the fat that will help keep the thigh moist during grilling.

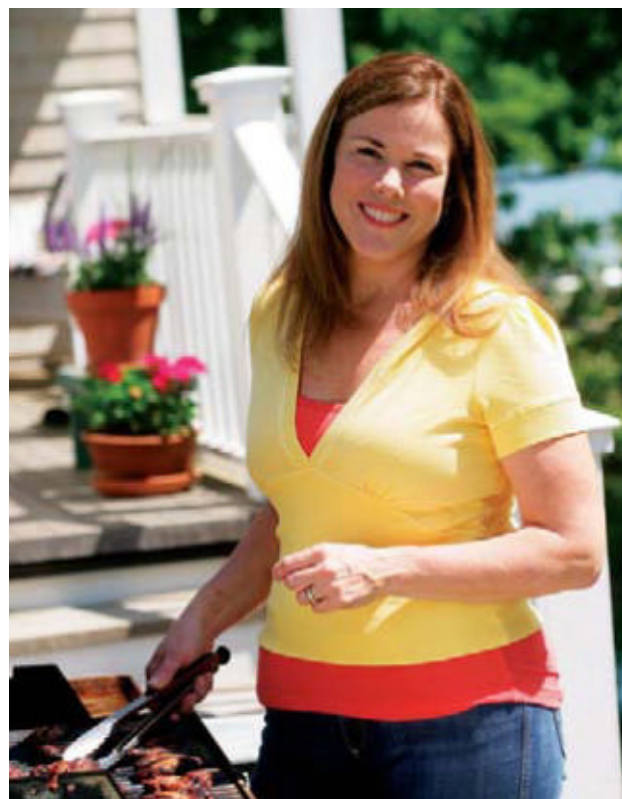
Chicken thighs are multimuscular, unlike breasts, which are a single muscle. When the thigh bone is removed, those muscles become more loosely connected, which explains why boneless thighs often look a bit lumpy when unfurled on the grill. The upside is that this unevenness creates little depressions that hold onto sauces and rubs.

(continued on p. 32)

More flavorful than chicken breasts, boneless thighs cook quickly and stay juicy



Lay the chicken flat. Unfold the boneless chicken thighs, remove any large pockets of fat, and spread the pieces flat on the grill.



Go for the grill marks. Pam puts the chicken on a hot grill and doesn't turn it for 4 to 6 minutes, so that the pieces will develop nice grill marks.



Check for doneness. Look for the chicken thighs to shrink and plump up a bit when they're ready to take off the grill.

Grilled Five-Spice Chicken Thighs with Soy-Vinegar Sauce & Cilantro

Serves four to six.

2 Tbs. Chinese five-spice powder
1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. dark brown sugar
1 tsp. garlic powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
2 Tbs. soy sauce
2 tsp. rice vinegar
1 tsp. Asian sesame oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
2½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 8 large, 10 medium, or 12 small), trimmed of excess fat
2 Tbs. vegetable oil; more for the grill
3 Tbs. chopped cilantro

Mix the five-spice powder, the 1 Tbs. sugar, the garlic powder, and the salt in a small bowl. In another bowl, mix the soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, red pepper flakes, and remaining 1 tsp. sugar.

Put the chicken in a shallow pan, drizzle with the vegetable oil, and

toss to coat evenly. Sprinkle the spice mixture over the chicken; toss and rub to coat thoroughly.

Prepare a hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill with all burners on medium high for 10 minutes. Clean the hot grate with a wire brush and then lubricate it with an oil-soaked paper towel. Put the chicken on the grate and grill (covered on a gas grill or uncovered over a charcoal fire) until one side has dark grill marks, 5 to 6 minutes for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs. Turn and continue to grill until well marked on the other sides and cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes longer for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs.

Move the thighs to a serving dish. Drizzle with about half of the soy mixture, sprinkle with the cilantro, and toss to coat. Let rest 4 to 5 minutes, tossing once or twice. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature, with the remaining soy mixture passed at the table.



Doneness tests are different for chicken thighs than for breasts. For a chicken breast, you look for the meat to change color from pink to white. The dark meat of chicken thighs, though, looks pinkish brown even when they're thoroughly cooked. Food safety experts recommend that boneless thighs be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F, but it can be pretty tough to use a meat thermometer on such a small, irregular cut, especially on the grill.

The cooking times given here (10 minutes for small thighs and 12 minutes for large ones) will pretty much guarantee a fully cooked thigh. You'll notice that when the thighs are done, they'll shrink and plump up a bit (see bottom photo, p. 31). The good thing is that you can relax when you're cooking thighs, knowing that even if you overcook them slightly, they won't dry out.

The robust flavor of chicken thighs makes them a natural for all kinds of bold spice and herb rubs. Included here are four of my favorite recipes, to give you an idea of how versatile thighs are.

Next time you reach for that package of boneless, skinless chicken breasts, stop, and pick up thighs instead. They just may become your new favorite.

Grilled Rosemary Chicken Thighs with Sweet & Sour Orange Dipping Sauce

Serves four to six.

1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary
2 tsp. dark brown sugar
2 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
2 Tbs. vegetable oil; more for the grill
2½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs
 (about 8 large, 10 medium, or 12 small),
 trimmed of excess fat
1 cup orange marmalade
¼ cup rice vinegar

In a small bowl, mix the 1 Tbs. rosemary with the brown sugar, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. In a shallow pan, drizzle the oil over the chicken and toss to coat. Sprinkle the chicken evenly with the rosemary mixture.

Warm the marmalade, vinegar, and remaining 1 tsp. rosemary in a small saucepan over low heat until just warm; set aside in a warm spot.

Prepare a hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill with all burners on medium high for 10 minutes. Clean the hot grate with a wire brush and then lubricate it with an oil-soaked paper towel. Put the chicken on the grate and grill (covered on a gas grill or uncovered over a charcoal fire) until one side has dark grill marks, 5 to 6 minutes for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs. Turn and continue to grill until well marked on the other sides and cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes longer for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs.

Move the thighs to a platter and let rest 4 to 5 minutes. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature with individual bowls of warm marmalade dipping sauce.

Skewer up some kebabs

Chicken thighs lend themselves to kebabs, which make a nice change of pace on the grill. Any of these recipes can be cooked on skewers in roughly the same amount of time.

To make kebabs, trim the thighs and then slice them lengthwise into 1½- to 2-inch-wide strips. Toss with the flavoring of choice; then thread the chicken onto six 8- or 12-inch skewers (soak wood skewers in water for at least 20 minutes first), folding each strip in half as you skewer it. If some strips are very thick, cut them in half crosswise rather than folding them so that all the pieces of chicken are roughly the same size. Grill the kebabs, turning them every 4 to 5 minutes as dark grill marks form, until cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes total.



Grilled Tandoori-Style Chicken Thighs

Serves four to six.

- 1½ Tbs. ground cumin**
- 1½ tsp. curry powder**
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt**
- 1 tsp. garlic powder**
- ½ tsp. ground ginger**
- ¼ tsp. cayenne**
- 2 Tbs. vegetable oil; more for the grill**
- 3 Tbs. red-wine vinegar**
- ½ cup regular or nonfat plain yogurt**
- 2½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 8 large, 10 medium, or 12 small), trimmed of excess fat**
- 3 Tbs. chopped cilantro**

Mix the cumin, curry powder, salt, garlic powder, ginger, and cayenne in a medium bowl. Heat the oil in an 8-inch skillet over low heat. Stir the spices into the oil and heat until they bubble and become fragrant, 30 to 60 seconds. Return the spice blend to the bowl and stir in the vinegar and then the yogurt.

Add the chicken thighs and toss to coat evenly. Let sit 10 minutes or cover and marinate in the refrigerator for up to 12 hours.

When ready to cook, prepare a hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill with all burners on medium high for 10 minutes. Clean the hot grate with a wire brush and then lubricate it with an oil-soaked paper towel. Put the chicken on the grate and grill (covered on a gas grill or uncovered over a charcoal fire) until one side has dark grill marks, 5 to 6 minutes for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs. Turn and continue to grill until well marked on the other sides and cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes longer for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs. Move the thighs to a platter and let rest 4 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle with chopped cilantro before serving.

Indonesian Grilled Chicken Thighs with Mango-Peanut Salsa

Serves four to six.

- 1 Tbs. ground ginger**
- 1 Tbs. ground coriander**
- 1½ tsp. turmeric**
- 1½ tsp. garlic powder**
- 3 Tbs. vegetable oil; more for the grill**
- 1 Tbs. Asian chile paste (like sambal oelek)**
- 1 Tbs. dark brown sugar**
- 2 tsp. kosher salt**
- 2½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 8 large, 10 medium, or 12 small), trimmed of excess fat**
- 2 cups small-diced fresh mango (from 2 large mangos)**
- ½ cup small-diced red bell pepper (from 1 small pepper)**
- ½ cup salted peanuts, coarsely chopped**
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions (white and green parts of 4 to 5 scallions)**
- 3 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro or mint or a combination**
- 1 Tbs. seeded, minced jalapeño**
- 2 to 3 Tbs. fresh lime juice**

Mix the ginger, coriander, turmeric, and garlic powder in a medium bowl. Heat 2 Tbs. of the oil in an 8-inch skillet over low heat. Add the spices to the hot oil and heat until they bubble and become fragrant, 30 to 60 seconds. Return

the spice blend to the bowl; stir in the chile paste, brown sugar, and salt. The mixture will be thick and pasty. Add the chicken and toss to coat evenly.

In a medium bowl, mix the mango, bell pepper, peanuts, scallions, cilantro or mint, jalapeño, and the remaining 1 Tbs. oil. Add the lime juice to taste. Set aside. (You can season the chicken and make the salsa up to 2 hours ahead and refrigerate.)

Prepare a hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill with all burners on medium high for 10 minutes. Clean the hot grate with a wire brush and then lubricate it with an oil-soaked paper towel. Put the chicken on the grate and grill (covered on a gas grill or uncovered over a charcoal fire) until one side has dark grill marks, 5 to 6 minutes for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs. Turn and continue to grill until well marked on the other sides and cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes longer for large thighs or 4 to 5 minutes for medium and small thighs.

Move the thighs to a platter, let rest 4 to 5 minutes, and serve hot, warm, or at room temperature with the salsa alongside.

Pam Anderson is a Fine Cooking contributing editor. ♦



Endless Summer Corn Sautés

For a versatile side dish, take the corn off the cob and layer on the flavors



Heat butter
& olive oil



+ Add scallions,
onions, or leeks



+ Add vegetables
(optional)



+ Toss in fresh
corn kernels



Stir in ginger,
garlic, or spices



+ Fold in
fresh herbs



+ Squeeze on
lemon or lime



+ Season with
salt & pepper

=

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

In the Delaware summers of my childhood, there were some things as certain as death and taxes. My uncles fished for flounder and drank Budweiser. We kids picked crabs, snapped green beans, and shucked corn almost daily. And in August, we all battled the horseflies for beach plums to make into jelly and turned ripe, dripping juicy Delaware peaches into the best hand-cranked home-made ice cream you'd ever taste.

The not-so-secret ingredient in that ice cream was the rich heavy cream (43% fat) from our local Lewes Dairy. We poured that cream on everything, including Kellogg's Special K. But our favorite destination for that cream was my grandmother Honey's

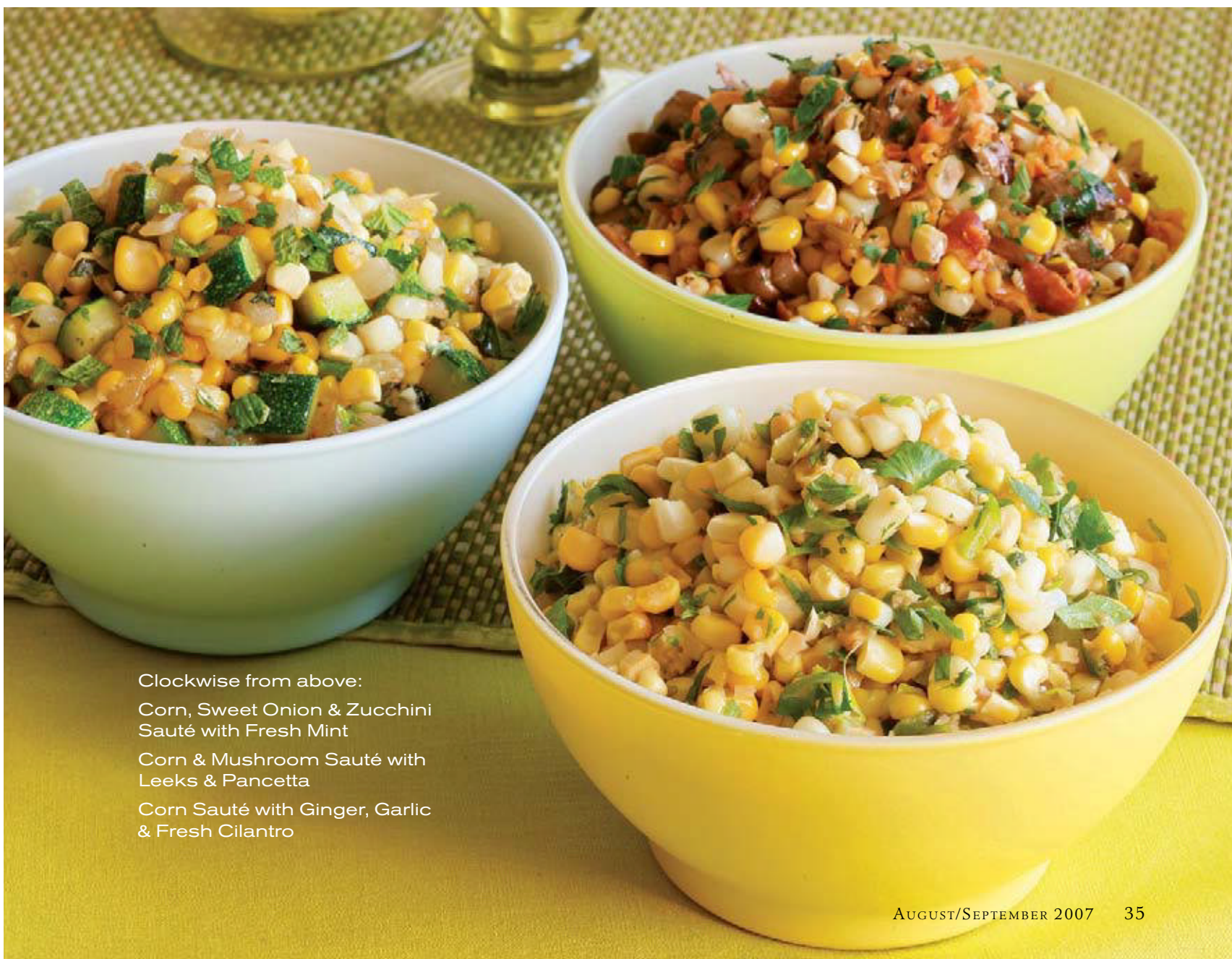
succotash—a simple dish made from my father's pole beans, our local Silver Queen corn, a bit of cream and butter, and a lot of freshly ground pepper.

There was never a call to do anything different with all that fresh corn we were blessed with. (Before the rise of housing developments and the popularity of retirement, Delaware was like one big cornfield conveniently laced with brackish streams for the blue crabs to live in.) Corn was either served on the cob or off in that succotash.

All these years later, I still love good, sweet fresh corn, simply prepared. But I also like variety, which is why I had so much fun coming up with these corn side dishes. Once you grasp the simple technique of sautéing the ingredients and adding flavor in

stages (see left), you can vary the character of these dishes by adding different aromatics, other vegetables, fresh herbs, and even (gasp!) a little heavy cream.

Use these sautés for more than just side dishes. Aside from being able to tailor the flavors of these dishes, you can also choose how you'd like to serve them. For instance, I like to serve my Corn, Sweet Onion & Zucchini Sauté as a bed for grilled fish. The Corn & Mushroom Sauté with Leeks & Pancetta is a great topping for a grilled steak. Or you could use any variation as a taco or quesadilla filling, a base for a frittata, or of course, a simple side dish on its own. It's your choice; the only thing that's certain is this: If you get tired of plain old corn on the cob, you can cut the kernels off and turn them into something exciting.



Clockwise from above:

Corn, Sweet Onion & Zucchini Sauté with Fresh Mint

Corn & Mushroom Sauté with Leeks & Pancetta

Corn Sauté with Ginger, Garlic & Fresh Cilantro



Corn, Sweet Onion & Zucchini Sauté with Fresh Mint

Serves four as a side dish.

2 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1½ cups small-diced sweet onion, such as a Vidalia (about 7 oz. or half a large onion)
1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
1¼ cups small-diced zucchini (about 6 oz. or 1 medium-small zucchini)
2 slightly heaping cups fresh corn kernels (from 4 medium ears)
2 tsp. minced garlic
Scant ½ tsp. ground cumin
Scant ½ tsp. ground coriander
2 to 3 Tbs. chopped fresh mint
One-quarter lemon
Freshly ground black pepper

Melt 1 Tbs. of the butter with the olive oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan or Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Add the onions and ½ tsp. of the salt, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Uncover, raise the heat to medium, and cook, stirring frequently, until the onions are light golden and shrunken, another 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and the zucchini. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is slightly shrunken and almost tender, about 3 minutes. Add the corn, garlic, and the remaining ½ tsp. salt. Cook, stirring frequently and scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon, until the corn is tender but still slightly toothy to the bite, 3 to 4 minutes. (It will begin to intensify in color, glisten, and be somewhat shrunken in size, and the bottom of the pan may be slightly brown.) Add the cumin and coriander and cook, stirring, until very fragrant, about 30 seconds.

Remove the pan from the heat, add all but about ½ Tbs. of the mint, a good squeeze of lemon, and a few generous grinds of pepper. Stir, let sit 2 minutes, and stir again, scraping up the brown bits from the bottom of the pan (moisture released from the vegetables as they sit will loosen the bits). Season to taste with more salt, pepper, or lemon. Serve warm, sprinkled with the remaining mint.

A tidy way to cut corn

To prepare corn for sautéing, first shuck the ears and remove all the silks by running your hands up and down the ear. Then break the ears in half cleanly. (I find using my hands to do this is easiest and safest, but you can cut them in half with a sharp chef's knife, too.) Stand each half cut side down on a large clean dish towel placed over a cutting board. Cut the kernels off the cob with a sharp chef's knife and a downward sawing motion, cutting around the ear to remove all the kernels. Discard the cobs or save for a soup stock. Gather the towel up and dump the kernels into a bowl.



Corn Sauté with Ginger, Garlic & Fresh Cilantro

Serves four as a side dish.

2 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
¾ cup thinly sliced scallions (white and light-green parts, from 1 large bunch)
1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
2 slightly heaping cups fresh corn kernels (from 4 medium ears)
2 Tbs. minced fresh ginger
2 to 3 tsp. minced garlic
Scant 1 tsp. minced serrano chile (include the ribs and seeds for a spicier dish)
2 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro
One-half lime
Freshly ground black pepper

Melt 1 Tbs. of the butter with the olive oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the scallions and ½ tsp. of the salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the scallions are soft and lightly browned, about 3 minutes.

Add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and the corn, ginger, garlic, serrano, and the remaining ½ tsp. salt. Cook, stirring frequently and scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon, until the corn is tender but still slightly toothy to the bite, 3 to 4 minutes. (It will begin to intensify in color, glisten, and be somewhat shrunk in size, and the bottom of the pan may be slightly brown.)

Remove the pan from the heat, add all but about ½ Tbs. of the cilantro, a good squeeze of the lime, and a few generous grinds of pepper. Stir, let sit 2 minutes, and stir again, scraping up the brown bits from the bottom of the pan (moisture released from the vegetables as they sit will loosen the bits). Season to taste with more salt, pepper, or lime. Serve warm, sprinkled with the remaining cilantro.



Corn & Mushroom Sauté with Leeks & Pancetta

Serves four as a side dish.

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1½ oz. thinly sliced pancetta (4 to 5 slices)
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 cup small-diced leeks (white and light-green parts only, from 1 large leek)
1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
2 generous cups medium-diced cremini mushrooms (about 6 oz.)
2 slightly heaping cups fresh corn kernels (from 4 medium ears)
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 to 2 tsp. coarsely chopped fresh thyme or oregano
Freshly ground black pepper
One-quarter lemon
3 Tbs. heavy cream

Heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan or Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Add the pancetta and cook, turning occasionally with tongs, until light golden and crisp, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer the pancetta to a plate lined with paper towels, leaving the fat in the pan.

Increase the heat to medium and carefully add 1 Tbs. of the butter to the fat. When melted, add the leeks and ½ tsp. of the salt. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally and scraping up any browned bits from the pancetta, until the leeks are softened and slightly

shrunk, 3 to 5 minutes. Uncover and cook, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add another 1 Tbs. of the butter, the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil, the mushrooms, and the remaining ½ tsp. salt. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are softened and a little shrunk (they will have given off a good bit of liquid), 3 to 4 minutes. Uncover and cook, stirring frequently, until the liquid evaporates and the mushrooms are lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes (the bottom of the pan will be quite brown).

Add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and the corn. Cook, stirring frequently and scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon, until the corn is tender but still slightly toothy to the bite, 3 to 4 minutes. (It will begin to intensify in color, glisten, and be somewhat shrunk in size, and the bottom of the pan will be brown.)

Remove the pan from the heat, add the fresh herbs, a few generous grinds of pepper, and a good squeeze of the lemon. Stir in the heavy cream. Let sit a minute or two and stir again, scraping up the brown bits from the bottom of the pan (moisture released from the vegetables as they sit will loosen the bits). Season to taste with more salt, pepper, or lemon. Crumble the reserved pancetta over top and serve warm.

*Susie Middleton
is editor of Fine
Cooking. ♦*

Great Tomatoes Don't Need Cooking to Become a Great Sauce



BY EVAN KLEIMAN

I've traveled to Italy for more than thirty years, and I've never seen anyone make—or eat—what we call pasta salads. But I can't tell you how often I've seen a gifted home cook make a *salsa cruda*—a beautiful sauce of chopped raw tomatoes, fresh herbs, a bit of garlic, and a healthy dose of extra-virgin olive oil—and toss it with hot pasta. Ripe tomatoes need to marinate only half an hour for their sweet juices to be coaxed into a delicious sauce, so this vibrantly flavored pasta dish comes together

easily in the time it takes for the water to boil and the pasta to cook.

Start with great tomatoes and the right cut. You'll get the best results if you buy ripe tomatoes at a farmstand or farmers' market or get them from your own garden. They'll be the tastiest and juiciest, since they've been picked at their ripest. How you cut the tomatoes is important, too. A half-inch dice is the perfect size, because it will give you a juicy sauce while maintaining the integrity of the tomatoes.

Add a good amount of olive oil. The oil serves a double purpose here. First, it combines with the juices drawn by the salt to make the sauce. No oil means no sauce, just tomato juice. Second, a good fruity extra-virgin olive oil will lend its rich flavor to the dish, giving it lots of body and depth.

Toss the sauce with hot pasta. This is key: The heat of just-cooked pasta helps release the flavors in the tomatoes and creates a better integrated dish than if you mixed the sauce with cold pasta.



Heirloom tomatoes like these make a delicious no-cook tomato sauce, but any kind—or any shape—of farmstand tomato will do, as long as it's ripe.

No-Cook Tomato Sauce (Salsa Cruda)

Serves four to six.

This sauce and its variations at right are for 1 lb. of imported Italian dried pasta. You can pair the sauce with any pasta shape, though it clings best to short, ridged types like penne rigate and rigatoni.

2 lb. ripe tomatoes (about 3 large or 4 medium), cored and cut into ½-inch dice (about 4 cups)
½ cup good-quality extra-virgin olive oil
⅓ cup roughly chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley or basil or both
1 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh thyme
1 tsp. minced garlic (1 medium clove)
1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste
Pinch crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Combine all of the ingredients in a non-reactive bowl large enough to hold the tomatoes and the cooked pasta; mix well. Let the sauce sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours.

Toss the sauce with just-cooked pasta. Adjust the seasoning to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

Try an add-in for a new personality

While salsa cruda is delicious on its own, you can choose one of these tasty additions for a little variety.

Cheese

Stir the cheese (see choices below) into the No-Cook Tomato Sauce after it has sat at room temperature and just before adding the pasta. In addition to the 1 cup Parmigiano, choose ¼ to ½ lb. of another cheese, depending on how strong or sharp it is.

1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

¼ to ½ lb. of one cheese:

Feta, crumbled
Asiago, grated
Maytag blue, chopped
Gorgonzola, chopped
Fresh mozzarella, diced
Fresh goat cheese, crumbled

Tapenade

Yields about ¾ cup.

Mix half the tapenade into the No-Cook Tomato Sauce before it sits at room temperature. Garnish each serving of pasta with some of the remaining tapenade.

½ cup pitted Kalamata olives
¼ cup pitted green olives
¼ cup pitted oil-cured black olives
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary (from 1 medium sprig)

Put all of the ingredients in a food processor and pulse until very roughly chopped, about 13 pulses.

Basil Pesto

Yields about 1¼ cups.

Stir the basil pesto into the No-Cook Tomato Sauce after it has sat at room temperature and just before adding the pasta.

2 cups firmly packed fresh basil (preferably Italian Genovese)

1 large clove garlic
1 tsp. kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
½ cup pine nuts or walnuts

Put the basil, garlic, salt, and 2 or 3 grinds of pepper in a food processor and process until the basil and garlic are finely chopped, about 15 seconds. With the machine running, pour ¼ cup of the olive oil down the feed tube in a slow, steady stream. Turn off the processor and add the Parmigiano. Process until the cheese is incorporated, about 20 seconds. With the machine running, slowly add the remaining ¼ cup oil. Add the nuts and pulse until they're coarsely chopped.

Evan Kleiman is the owner and chef of Angeli Caffè in Los Angeles. She is also the author of numerous cookbooks, including Pasta Fresca. ♦

Grilled Bread

For Satisfying Sides,
Starters & Mains



side dish

Grilled Garlic Bread

Serves eight.

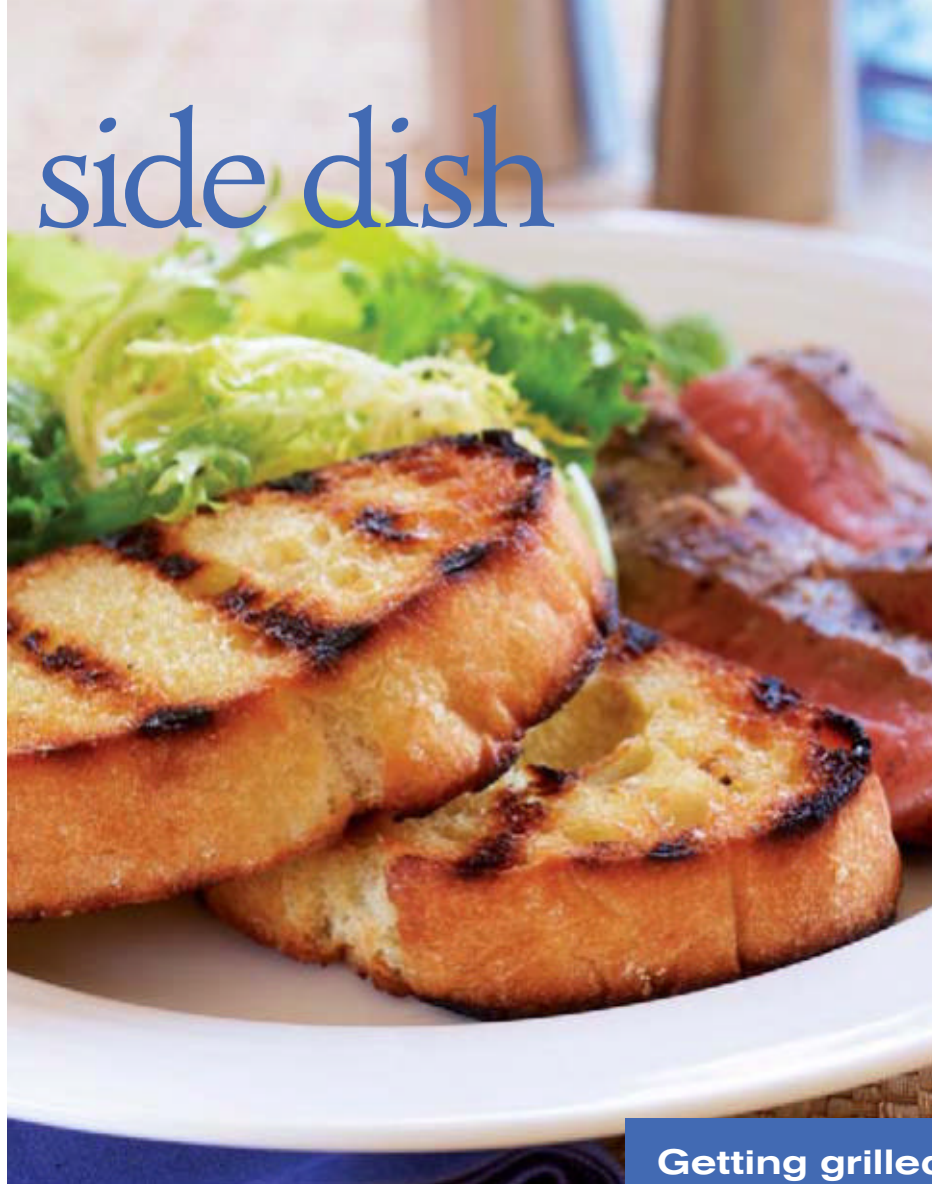
Eight $\frac{3}{4}$ - to 1-inch-thick slices crusty, artisan-style bread, like ciabatta

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil for brushing

1 to 2 large cloves garlic, peeled and halved

Sea salt or kosher salt

Prepare a medium-low charcoal or gas grill fire. Brush both sides of the bread with the oil and grill, covered, turning once, until golden and marked on both sides, 1 to 3 minutes per side. Off the heat but while the bread is still hot, lightly rub one side of each bread slice with the cut sides of the garlic—heat and friction from the bread will cause the garlic to “melt” into the bread. Sprinkle with salt and serve.



BY ELIZABETH KARMEI

When you think of grilling, bread probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind. But to me, there is no food that better captures the flavor of the grill. Think about it: Bread dipped in olive oil is good, but how about crunchy, smoky, *grilled* bread dipped in olive oil? It's almost a meal in itself.

While grilled bread is delicious on its own, its real beauty lies in its versatility—it makes an excellent foundation for appetizers, sandwiches, and even salads. I first realized this when I started grilling bread to round out some of my favorite grilled-vegetable salads. The bread not only absorbed the vegetables' flavorful juices, which otherwise would have pooled in the bottom of the bowl, but it also gave the salads a surprising crunch and delicious, smoky flavor notes. Once I made this

discovery, I started grilling bread to use in many kinds of dishes.

At its simplest, grilled bread makes a perfect accompaniment to any summer meal. The Grilled Garlic Bread featured here is a more sophisticated version of the butter-soaked garlic bread that many of us grew up with, but it's easier to make and tastier, too. If you add a topping, like the goat cheese and marinated roasted peppers in the recipe on p. 42, you have a wonderful starter. The peppers can be prepared in advance, making the crostini easy to assemble at the last minute.

And finally, for a more substantial dish, try using grilled bread as a component of a main-course salad, like the Grilled Corn, Shrimp & Chorizo Salad on p. 43. Just before serving, pile this colorful salad onto grilled bread, which adds a great texture to the salad and makes it heartier, too.

Getting grilled bread just right

Choose artisan or rustic country breads; ciabatta is my favorite, but you can also try sourdough or a French boule.

Slice the bread $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch thick.

Make sure the cooking grates are clean and heated.

Grill bread, covered, over direct medium-low heat.

Have a pair of tongs handy to turn the bread and remove it from the grill.

Patience is the key to great grilled bread. Don't be tempted to use higher heat, or the bread will burn.

Grilled Goat Cheese Crostini with a Tangle of Marinated Roasted Peppers

Serves eight as an appetizer.

Goat cheese speckled with fresh thyme is the perfect creamy counterpoint to the sweet, tangy roasted peppers in this recipe. Serve these crostini as an appetizer or paired with a simple green salad for a light lunch.

3 medium bell peppers (1 red, 1 orange, and 1 yellow)

3 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1½ tsp. fresh thyme

¼ tsp. kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 recipe Grilled Garlic Bread, p. 41

One 4½- to 5½-oz. container of soft, spreadable goat cheese (such as Chavrie), at room temperature

Prepare a medium-high grill fire. Grill the bell peppers, turning occasionally, until the skin chars all over, 15 to 20 minutes. Put the charred peppers in a heatproof bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let sit until cool enough to handle, about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine the balsamic vinegar, olive oil, ½ tsp. of the thyme, salt, and about 5 grinds of pepper. Mix well.

Remove the pepper skins and seeds and cut the peppers into thin strips. Add the peppers to the vinegar mixture and let them marinate for at least 1 hour and up to 3 days. (Refrigerate if making more than a few hours ahead and return to room temperature before assembling the crostini.)

Spread each slice of the grilled garlic bread with a generous layer of goat cheese, sprinkle with some of the remaining thyme, and top with a tangle of the peppers and a small grind of black pepper. Serve immediately.



Good things start with grilled bread

Slather grilled bread with tapenade, top with grilled asparagus and Asiago cheese, and serve as an open-face sandwich.

Top grilled bread with roughly mashed avocado, chopped shallots, and a slice of smoked salmon.

Make a grilled-bread BLT with lots of mayonnaise, applewood-smoked bacon, tomatoes, and Boston lettuce.

Spread pesto on grilled bread and layer on thin slices of tomato and fresh mozzarella.

Toss frisée with pancetta, apples, and a blue-cheese vinaigrette, and serve over slices of grilled bread.

Top grilled bread with sliced grilled Italian sausage, grilled onions, and sliced red cabbage tossed with warm vinegar and fennel-seed dressing.

reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave the Grilled Goat Cheese Crostini with a Tangle of Marinated Roasted Peppers a real-world test. Here are the results:

The goat cheese crostini made an impressive starter. They looked a lot more complicated to make than they really were. I loved how nicely the flavors blended; in fact, I was surprised that so many strong flavors could complement one another so well. I will definitely make this quick and easy recipe again.

—Maureen Gazzola,
Mill Valley, California



main dish

Grilled Corn, Shrimp & Chorizo Salad

Serves eight.

This one-dish meal marries the best flavors from summer shore dinners—seafood and corn—with the smokiness of Spanish paprika and chorizo.

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil;
more for drizzling

4 to 5 large cloves garlic, peeled and grated on the small holes of a box grater to yield about 2 Tbs.

Kosher salt

1 tsp. sweet smoked paprika (Spanish pimentón)

1/3 cup sherry vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE SALAD:

8 large ears fresh corn, husked
Extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

1 cup thinly sliced scallions, both white and green parts (about 1 large bunch)

24 easy-peel shrimp in the shell (16 to 20 per lb.)

4 Spanish chorizo sausages (about 14 oz. total), split lengthwise

1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half

Freshly ground black pepper
1 recipe Grilled Garlic Bread, p. 41

Make the vinaigrette: Combine the olive oil and the grated garlic in a small saucepan. Cook over low heat until the garlic begins to brown slightly, about 10 minutes. Add a pinch of salt and stir to dissolve. Remove from the heat and let sit until the oil cools a bit, about 3 minutes. Add the paprika and let it infuse the oil for about 12 minutes more. Strain the oil through a fine sieve and discard the garlic. (If making in advance, store in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.)

Put the vinegar in a small bowl. Add a pinch of salt and a

couple of grinds of black pepper and whisk to combine. Slowly drizzle in the garlic-paprika oil, whisking constantly until well incorporated. Taste and adjust the seasonings if necessary.

Make the salad: Prepare a medium-high charcoal or gas grill fire. Brush the corn all over with olive oil and season with salt. Grill, covered, turning occasionally until all sides are charred and deeply blistered in places, 6 to 10 minutes. Remove from the grill, cut the kernels off the cobs while still warm, and put the kernels in a large bowl. Add half the vinaigrette and toss to coat the kernels. Stir in the scallions and set aside.

Reduce the grill temperature to medium, or if using charcoal, let the coals die down a bit. Grill the shrimp and the sausage, turning once halfway through the cooking time, until the shrimp are pink, curled, and cooked through,

4 to 6 minutes, and the sausages are plump and well browned, 5 to 8 minutes. Transfer the shrimp and sausages to separate platters and cover with foil to keep warm.

While still warm, peel the shrimp and gently fold into the salad, along with the rest of the vinaigrette. Slice the sausages into 1/3-inch-thick half-moon-shaped pieces and mix into the salad. Add the tomatoes and mix gently. Taste and season with pepper and more salt if necessary. Serve the salad warm or at room temperature spooned over slices of grilled garlic bread.

Elizabeth Karmel is the author of Taming the Flame: Secrets for Hot-and-Quick Grilling and Low-and-Slow BBQ. ♦

Steaks Mexican Style

If fajitas are the first thing that comes to mind, think again

BY JIM PEYTON

Say “Mexican steaks” and probably the first thing you think of is fajitas made with sizzling skirt steak. As good as fajitas are, it might surprise you to discover that traditional Mexican steak dishes are often more sophisticated. They feature juicy, tender steaks like rib-eyes, T-bones, and New York strips and get punched up with rich, bold spices or sauces.

I’ve enjoyed many steak dishes in Mexico that deliver big, meaty flavor but that also have south-

of-the-border additions, such as chiles and Mexican cheeses. Often more elegant in taste and presentation than the rustic Mexican dishes most of us are familiar with, these steaks are easy to recreate at home and offer an intriguing twist to the traditional American steakhouse meal.

Size matters—thinner’s better

The most obvious difference in steak dishes down south is that the steaks are generally cut thinner than those served in American

restaurants—often no more than ½ inch thick. As a result, portion sizes are smaller—generally 6 to 8 ounces, compared to the 12- to 14-ounce portions seen on American plates. This is not to say that all steaks served in Mexico are thin—I have had thick T-bones in Chihuahua, smothered with chiles nearly as mild and sweet as bell peppers; and in Sonora I was served a 1-pound steak cut from the center of the tenderloin. But the custom of serving thinner cuts like those in these recipes leaves room for side

3 ways to add chile flavor

A wide range of chile varieties is readily available in the United States nowadays, and each offers a different flavor and heat level. Adding further possibilities are the different forms in which you can find chiles: fresh, canned, dried, and powdered. By using a combination of chile types and forms, you can go beyond just adding heat to a dish to create a surprisingly mild, balanced, and interesting flavor.



Chile powders

are made from dried chiles. They differ from the spice jars labeled “chili powder” in that they are ground solely from a specific type of chile. Chile powder is a mix of ground chiles with the addition of spices like garlic powder and cumin. Pure chile powders allow you to add the most nuanced hit of flavor and heat to a dish. I call for ancho chile powder in the Steak Adobo recipe because of its mild, fruity flavor. It has a moderate heat level and is also good in black beans dishes and mole sauce.



Dried chiles offer concentrated flavors that often differ so much from the fresh versions that they are given new names. For example, a dried poblano chile is called an ancho (above right). The ancho remains mild but takes on an entirely different, fruity, raisin-like flavor. Pasilla chiles (above left) are dried chilacas. Dried chiles are often rehydrated before use and then blended with a little liquid to form a paste.

dishes yet still fills the plate and the craving for red meat without breaking the bank or the diet.

Thinner cuts cook faster as well, making some of these dishes easy to serve on a weeknight. Whether prepared with a simple spice rub or a more elaborate sauce, all of these steaks take less than five minutes to pan-sear, grill, or broil.

Adding depth of flavor

What sets these steaks apart from their American counterparts is the earthy flavors and spice that comes



Canned chiles

are often easier to find than fresh ones, although the available varieties are limited. I call for canned rather than fresh chipotle chiles because they store well and are easier to work with. Chipotles are jalapeños which are smoke-dried and then packed with a tangy tomato sauce that absorbs their flavor and heat. They come out of the can soft and ready to use, and the seeds and veins are much easier to remove than they are in their dried form.



Steak with Red Onion, Wine & Port Sauce

Serves four.

The easy sauce reduction elevates this steak into a sophisticated dinner. The sauce can be made ahead and kept refrigerated for several days.

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 1½ cups dry red wine**
- ½ cup ruby port**
- 3 cups thinly sliced red onion (1 large)**
- 4 medium white or cremini mushrooms, chopped (about ¾ cup)**
- 3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**
- 1 large chipotle chile (from a can of chipotles en adobo), seeds removed**
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 1 tsp. dried thyme**
- 2 cups low-salt beef broth**
- 3 Tbs. cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces**

Kosher salt

FOR THE STEAKS:

- Four ½-inch-thick boneless rib-eye, New York strip, or T-bone steaks (6 to 8 oz. each)**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Combine the wine and port with the onions, mushrooms, garlic, chile, parsley, and thyme in a 3- or 4-qt. saucepan. Bring to a boil and then simmer very briskly until the liquid is reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Add the broth and reduce by half again, about 13 minutes. Strain the liquid and discard the solids. Clean the saucepan and return the strained liquid to the pan. Reduce until there is just over ⅓ cup liquid remaining, about 5 minutes. The sauce may be prepared to this point up to 2 days ahead. Refrigerate if working more than a few hours ahead.

Grill or broil the steaks: Prepare a medium-high gas or charcoal fire or heat the broiler on high. Season the steaks with salt and pepper and grill or broil until they are cooked to your liking. Medium rare takes about 1½ minutes per side; medium, 2 minutes per side. Let rest while you finish the sauce.

Bring the wine reduction to a simmer. Remove from the heat and whisk in the butter. Season to taste with salt. Spoon a tablespoon or so of sauce over each steak.

from adding Mexican ingredients. In all of these, that means some form of chile—but that doesn't mean all these dishes are hot. Depending on the variety and form (see sidebar, p. 44), chiles offer a broad range of flavors, from fruity to smoky. As you'll see in the Steak with Three-Chile Sauce recipe, incorporating more than one type of chile in a dish is a way to achieve a rounded flavor, with many notes.

A sauce reduction, as in the Steak with Red Onion, Wine & Port Sauce recipe, is another example of the depth of flavor attainable in Mexican cooking. This dish comes from the upscale *neuva cocina Mexicana* tradition—Mexico's answer to modern fusion cooking. It results in an elegant entrée that you might serve at a party, showing that Mexican food is far more than simple bean- and tortilla-based dishes.

Sauces are not the only flavor addition to steaks in Mexico. The Steak Adobo is a good example of simple grilled red meat punched up with a spice rub. By first brushing the meat with lime juice, you can add a bright, subtle flavor to the steak. Don't apply the lime juice more than 15 minutes before the meat hits the heat, though, as even a little lime juice can begin to chemically "cook" the meat, which will change the texture and make it more difficult to brown.

Also on the plate

The Mexican style of serving one or more side dishes with steaks is easy to adopt in American kitchens. One traditional accompaniment is *rajas*, or sautéed onions and roasted and peeled poblano chiles. Enchiladas, quesadillas, rice, or beans would also lend a Mexican flair to a steak dinner. All of these steak dishes would be nice with a simple bibb and avocado salad (for side dish recipe ideas, visit FineCooking.com).



Steak Adobo

Serves four.

Some cooks mix the lime juice into the powdered spices to create a paste, but I find it easier to brush the juice onto the meat and then dust it with the spices.

2 tsp. ancho chile powder

½ tsp. finely ground black pepper

⅛ tsp. ground cinnamon

⅛ tsp. ground allspice

1 Tbs. fresh lime juice

Four ½-inch-thick boneless rib-eye, New York strip, or T-bone steaks (6 to 8 oz. each)

Kosher salt

1 Tbs. olive oil

In a small bowl, mix together the chile powder, pepper, cinnamon, and allspice. Brush a liberal coating of lime juice over one side of each steak, season generously with salt, and then sprinkle on a thin coating of the spices. This can be done up to 15 minutes before cooking; any longer and the lime juice may begin to affect the texture of the meat.

Heat the oil in a heavy 10-inch skillet over medium to medium-high heat. (It shouldn't be too hot or the spices can scorch.) When the oil is hot and shimmering, lay two of the steaks in the pan, seasoned side down. Allow them to cook 1 to 1½ minutes; flip and continue cooking until they are done as you like them, about 1 minute longer for medium rare. Repeat with the remaining steaks.

Whether prepared with a simple spice rub or a more elaborate sauce, all of these steaks take less than five minutes to pan-sear, grill, or broil.

Steak with Three-Chile Sauce

Serves four.

For this dish, the earthy combination of three of Mexico's most distinctive chiles creates a nuanced result that is not nearly as hot as you might expect. Much of the spiciness is cut by the cheeses, leaving only the subtle heat that real chile aficionados love.

FOR THE SAUCE:

1 ancho chile

1 pasilla chile

1 chipotle chile (from a can of chipotles en adobo)

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

**1½ cups medium-chopped white onion
(1 medium-small onion)**

2 cloves garlic, chopped

¼ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro

1 Tbs. brandy

¾ cup low-salt beef broth

¾ tsp. dark brown sugar

Heaping ¼ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste

FOR THE STEAKS:

Four ½-inch-thick boneless rib-eye, New York strip, or T-bone steaks (6 to 8 oz. each)

Juice from 1 large lime (about ¼ cup)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

**½ cup (2 oz.) grated Oaxaca cheese
(or mozzarella)**

½ cup (1½ oz.) grated cotija, anejo, or anejo enchilado cheese (or crumbled feta)

Make the sauce: Set a dry 10-inch skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes. Toast the ancho and pasilla chiles in the skillet for about 20 seconds on each side; don't let them scorch. Remove the stems, seeds, and ribs from the chiles. Soak the chiles in a bowl of hot water for about 20 minutes; drain them and put them in a blender. Add the chipotle.

Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in the 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and golden brown, lowering the heat as necessary to prevent scorching, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Put the onions and garlic in the blender, along with the cilantro, brandy, and ¼ cup water. Blend to a smooth paste, adding additional water as necessary, 1 Tbs. at a time, to purée the ingredients. Transfer the chile paste to a small bowl.

Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. When the oil is just beginning to smoke, add the chile paste. Cook, stirring constantly to incorporate it into the oil, until it's very thick, 2 to 4 minutes; reduce the heat if necessary to prevent burning. Reduce the heat to medium and gradually stir in the broth. Add the brown sugar and salt. Simmer until the mixture is the consistency of a medium-thick sauce, 1 to 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt.



Cook the steaks: Position a rack 4 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler on high. Drizzle both sides of the steaks with the lime juice and season all over with salt and pepper. Heat an 11- or 12-inch skillet, preferably cast iron, over medium-high heat, add the olive oil, and sear two of the steaks on one side, about 2 minutes. Turn the steaks and sear them on the other side, and then continue cooking, lowering the heat as needed, until they're done to your liking, about 2 minutes on the second side for medium rare. Transfer the steaks to a rimmed baking sheet and repeat with the remaining two steaks.

When all the steaks are cooked, turn the heat to medium, pour the chile sauce into the skillet, and stir to incorporate any browned bits and juices from the meat. Sprinkle some of the Oaxaca (or mozzarella) cheese on each steak, spoon some sauce over them, and then top them with some of the cotija or anejo (or feta) cheese. Put the baking sheet under the broiler to melt the cheese, about 1 minute, and serve immediately.

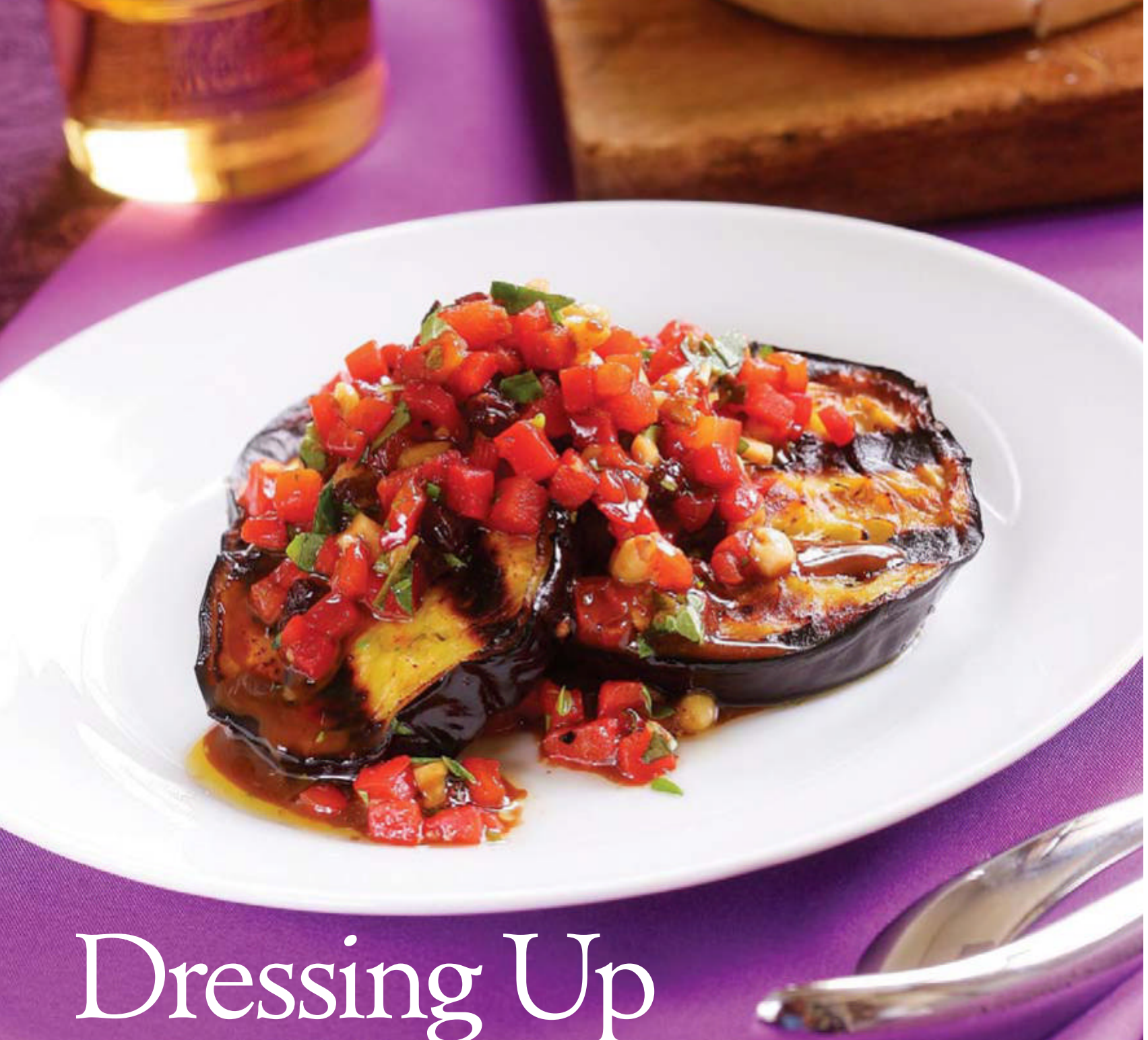
James Peyton is an author of Mexican cookbooks and a restaurant consultant from San Antonio. ♦



Mexican cheeses

Oaxaca cheese (above left) is a soft cow's milk variety that melts easily. It's widely available in supermarkets in the Southwest but is increasingly found across the country. It is delicious on pizzas, over nachos, or in grilled cheese sandwiches. Mozzarella makes the best substitute.

Cotija (above front) and **anejo** (above rear) cheeses are aged, crumbly, slightly salty cheeses traditionally made from cow's milk. Anejo enchilado is coated with a mild chile powder. These cheeses are excellent in pasta and salads and make a tasty garnish for tacos, quesadillas, and refried beans. Feta is the best substitute.



Dressing Up Grilled Eggplant

Bold vinaigrettes and sauces make a simple summer favorite something special

BY TASHA DESERIO

It's one of those happy coincidences of nature that the best eggplant hits the market during peak grilling season. I love the subtle, sweet flavor of eggplant, and grilling really brings it out. As for texture, the intense heat of the grill crisps and browns the outsides of the slices nicely, while it cooks the insides to a luscious creaminess.

When it's just my family, I tend to serve grilled eggplant simply brushed with olive oil and sprinkled with salt, so its flavor shines. But for entertaining, I like to pair it with a bold topping. Either way, it's a hearty side dish that elevates any meal.

By grilling, you get that great meaty texture and flavor of eggplant without all the oil from frying or sautéing. One of eggplant's greatest strengths—its ability to absorb other flavors—is also its greatest weakness when it comes to absorbing fats and oils. That's why I prefer grilling eggplant, a method that requires little oil and produces lighter results. The grill also imparts a delicate, smoky flavor and a crisp surface that contrasts beautifully with eggplant's soft interior.

To avoid bitterness, select and store eggplant carefully—but don't bother salting. There's plenty of disagreement among cooks about whether or not to salt eggplant before cooking. Some claim salting is essential to remove bitter juices; others believe it improves texture. I find that ripe, carefully selected eggplant is not bitter and has a delightful texture, even without salting.

In my experience, you can avoid the bitterness problem by buying eggplant when it's in season. The best eggplant arrives in the market around midsummer. The earliest crops have fewer seeds and consequently better flavor and texture. Look for ones that are evenly firm and deep in color, with shiny, unwrinkled skin. When you press gently on the flesh, it should bounce back. If it leaves a dent, the eggplant is old. Try to shop at farmers' markets, where you have a better chance of getting recently harvested vegetables.

The biggest difficulty in storing eggplant is that it does best at about 50°F. Most refrigerators are set at 41°F or lower, which is too cold for this tropical vegetable. If you can, buy eggplant the day you plan to cook it. If this isn't possible, find a cool spot in the kitchen to store it.

High heat and just the right size slices are the secret to perfect grilling. Eggplant needs to be set on a hot grill—you should hear the

A simple side dish...

master recipe

Grilled Eggplant

Serves four to six as a side dish.

1 large globe eggplant (about 1 lb.), trimmed and cut into ½-inch-thick rounds

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed

Kosher salt

Prepare a medium-high charcoal or gas grill fire. Brush both sides of the eggplant slices with olive oil and season with salt. Grill (covered on a gas grill; uncovered on a charcoal grill) until golden-brown grill marks form, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn the eggplant and grill until tender and well marked on the second sides, 3 to 4 minutes more. The interior should be grayish and soft rather than white and hard. Serve warm or at room temperature, by itself or with one of the toppings on the next two pages.



oiled slice sizzle gently. If the grill isn't hot enough, the eggplant will dry out rather than develop a nice grilled surface. To get good grill marks, resist moving the eggplant around.

Eggplant contains a lot of water and shrinks considerably when grilled, so it's important to cut it into slices of the right thickness. If you slice the eggplant too thick, the outside will char while the inside remains hard and uncooked; too thin, and it will overcook by the time it has grill marks. I've found that ½-inch-thick slices work best to produce a nicely charred outside and a tender inside. Cut into a piece of eggplant if you're not sure it's tender all the way through—the cooked flesh will be grayish and soft rather than white and hard.

Another appealing thing about eggplant is that it can be grilled several hours in advance and served at room temperature. The toppings I've included here can also be prepared ahead, but hold off on adding ingredients like garlic and toasted pine nuts until the day you plan to serve. For the Toasted-Breadcrumb Salsa Verde, wait until just before serving to combine the ingredients so the breadcrumbs don't lose their crunch.



The key to perfection is cutting eggplant slices an even ½ inch thick. With slices this size, the insides will cook through and become soft in the time it takes to char the outsides.

...goes fancy with bright toppings



Toasted-Breadcrumb Salsa Verde

Yields enough topping for one recipe of Grilled Eggplant.

The toasted breadcrumbs in this topping add a nice bit of texture to grilled eggplant, but the topping is also delicious on grilled meat or fish.

½ cup fine fresh breadcrumbs, preferably from a rustic French or Italian loaf

¼ cup plus ½ Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed

1 small shallot, very finely diced

2½ tsp. red-wine vinegar; more to taste

Kosher salt

¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 Tbs. chopped fresh basil

1 Tbs. chopped fresh mint

½ Tbs. chopped fresh marjoram or oregano

½ Tbs. capers, rinsed well and coarsely chopped

1 anchovy fillet (preferably salt-packed), rinsed and finely chopped

Heat the oven to 375°F. Put the breadcrumbs in a pie plate or on a small rimmed baking sheet, drizzle ½ Tbs. of the olive oil on top, and mix well to evenly coat the crumbs. Spread the crumbs and toast in the oven, stirring occasionally, until very crisp and golden brown, about 12 minutes. Let cool.

Combine the shallot, vinegar, and a pinch of salt in a small bowl. Let sit for at least 10 minutes and up to 2 hours.

Combine the remaining ¼ cup oil with the herbs, capers, and anchovy in a medium bowl. Set aside until ready to serve.

Just before serving, combine the shallot mixture and the toasted breadcrumbs with the herb mixture. If the salsa seems too dry, add a bit more olive oil. Season to taste with more salt or vinegar, if necessary—it should have a nice acidic kick. Spoon the salsa verde on top of grilled eggplant slices or serve on the side.

Olive, Orange & Anchovy Vinaigrette

Yields enough topping for one recipe of Grilled Eggplant.

This classic combination is delicious over eggplant or lamb—or both. If you're not a fan of anchovies, don't let that discourage you. The flavor mellows considerably when combined with the other ingredients.

2 anchovy fillets (preferably salt packed), rinsed

1 small clove garlic

Kosher salt

¼ cup black olives, such as Niçoise or Kalamata, rinsed well, pitted, and chopped finely

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs. fresh orange juice

2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar; more to taste

½ tsp. finely chopped orange zest (see p. 63)

Freshly ground black pepper

With a mortar and pestle, pound the anchovy, garlic, and a pinch of salt to a paste, or mince the anchovy and garlic, sprinkle with salt, and mash into a paste with the side of a chef's knife. Unless you're using a large mortar, transfer the mixture to a medium bowl. Whisk in the olives, olive oil, orange juice, vinegar, and orange zest. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and more red wine vinegar, if necessary.

Just before serving, whisk the vinaigrette again and spoon it over grilled eggplant—you may not need it all—or serve on the side.





Roasted Red Pepper Relish with Pine Nuts, Currants & Marjoram

Yields enough topping for one recipe of Grilled Eggplant.

In the summertime, my catering company often serves this relish on bruschetta with fresh ricotta cheese, but it's also delicious with grilled eggplant. Spoon any leftovers into a sandwich.

1 Tbs. dried currants
½ Tbs. red-wine vinegar
½ Tbs. balsamic vinegar
1 small clove garlic
Kosher salt
1 large red bell pepper
2 Tbs. pine nuts, lightly toasted and coarsely chopped
1½ Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. chopped fresh marjoram
Pinch cayenne; more to taste
3 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)

Combine the currants and both vinegars in a small bowl.

With a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and a pinch of salt to a paste, or mince the garlic, sprinkle with salt, and mash into a paste with the side of a chef's knife.

Roast the pepper: Set the pepper directly on a gas

burner, under a hot broiler, or on a hot charcoal or gas grill. Keep rotating the pepper until it's evenly charred all over. Transfer to a small bowl, cover tightly with plastic, and let cool.

When cool enough to handle, peel the pepper over the same bowl to catch any juice; discard the skin. Don't rinse the pepper—it's fine if a few charred bits remain. (It's helpful to rinse your fingers occasionally.) Still working over the bowl, split the pepper and remove the stem and as many of the seeds as possible. Set the juice aside. Cut the pepper into very small dice and put in a medium bowl. Strain the pepper juice over the pepper. Add the currants and vinegar, garlic paste, pine nuts, olive oil, marjoram, and cayenne and stir. Season to taste with salt and cayenne.

When ready to serve, stir the relish again and spoon it over grilled eggplant, or serve it on the side. Garnish with parsley, if using.

Garlic-Cumin Vinaigrette with Feta & Herbs

Yields enough topping for one recipe of Grilled Eggplant.

This dish looks especially nice served on a platter, with the feta and herbs scattered over the eggplant.

1 small clove garlic
Kosher salt
1½ Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1 small shallot, very finely diced
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
½ tsp. cumin seed, lightly toasted and pounded in a mortar or ground in a spice grinder
Pinch cayenne; more to taste
¼ cup crumbled feta
2 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh mint
2 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh cilantro

With a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and a pinch of salt to a paste, or mince the garlic, sprinkle with salt, and mash into a paste with the side of a chef's knife.

Combine the garlic paste and 1 Tbs. of the lemon juice in a small bowl and let sit for 10 minutes. Combine the shallot with the remaining ½ Tbs. lemon juice and a pinch of salt in another small bowl and let sit for 10 minutes. Whisk the olive oil, cumin, and cayenne into the garlic mixture. Season to taste with salt or cayenne, if necessary.

Top grilled eggplant slices with the shallots, feta, and herbs. Whisk the vinaigrette and drizzle it on top. Serve immediately.



Tasha DeSerio, a frequent contributor to Fine Cooking, is co-owner of Olive Green Catering in Berkeley, California. ♦

Scallions: More Than a Garnish

These little green onions can be a side dish on their own or a starring ingredient in soups and stir-fries

BY TONY ROSENFELD

Full disclosure: I'm not on any scallion board, nor have I ever received an all-expense-paid trip to some sunny scallion paradise. I just happen to love all things scallion. Almost every time I go to the market, no matter what I'm making for dinner, I'll pick up a bunch or two. For one thing, they're cheap and always seem to be in good shape, regardless of the season. But best of all, I love their sweet, mild flavor and their amazing versatility. Sure, you can sprinkle thin scallion slices on soups, salads, or pastas just before serving for an extra hit of flavor and color, but there are so many more things you can do with these dainty green alliums.

You can slowly cook thinly sliced scallions alone or with other aromatics like onions and garlic to form a rich flavor base for all kinds of soups, stews, and braises. Or you can cut them into slightly bigger pieces (2 inches is perfect) and toss them over high heat with meat and other vegetables for an Asian stir-fry or a quick pasta sauce. And who says you can't serve whole scallions as a vegetable side dish? In fact, they're delicious grilled, roasted, and even braised. Whether on the grill or in the oven, they take less than 10 minutes to cook and make a fine counterpoint to grilled steak, roasted or braised chicken, and seared or braised fish fillets. Whichever method you choose, you'll see that scallions are so quick and easy to cook and so adaptable that you'll soon find yourself joining me as a member of the unofficial fan club.

Grill, roast, or braise whole as a side dish

Choose thick scallions that have more body if you plan to cook them whole.

More ideas: Serve grilled scallions with grilled chicken thighs rubbed with Mexican spices. Or roast scallions with some olive oil, salt, and pepper and serve alongside roasted chicken, roasted leg of lamb, or a pot roast. I also like to brown a bunch of trimmed scallions gently in a little butter before braising them in chicken broth and finishing them with grated Parmigiano, fresh thyme, and black pepper.



Grilled Flank Steak with Sesame Sauce & Grilled Scallions

Serves four.

1½ lb. flank steak
1½ tsp. kosher salt
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup plus 1 Tbs. soy sauce
¼ cup canola oil; more for the grill
¼ cup minced fresh ginger
1½ Tbs. minced garlic
3 Tbs. rice vinegar
2 Tbs. Asian sesame oil
1½ Tbs. light or dark brown sugar
2 tsp. cornstarch
**20 scallions (preferably thick ones),
roots trimmed**
1 Tbs. sesame seeds, toasted

Season the flank steak with 1 tsp. of the salt and the pepper. Mix 1 Tbs. of the soy sauce, 1 Tbs. of the canola oil, 2 Tbs. of the ginger, and 1 Tbs. of the garlic in a large zip-top plastic bag. Add the steak and turn and massage it in the bag to cover it with the marinade. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours or as long as overnight.

Heat 1½ Tbs. of the canola oil and the remaining 2 Tbs. ginger and ½ Tbs. garlic in a small saucepan over medium heat until the ginger and garlic sizzle steadily and just begin to brown around the edges, about 3 minutes. Add ⅓ cup water, the remaining ¼ cup soy sauce, and the rice vinegar, sesame oil, and brown sugar. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. In a small bowl, whisk the cornstarch with 2 tsp. of water and stir it into the soy mixture. Cook until it returns to a boil and thickens slightly, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a fire on a charcoal grill with a medium-hot and a low zone. Rinse the scallions but do not dry them. Toss the scallions with the remaining 1½ Tbs. canola oil and ½ tsp. salt.

Clean and oil the grill grates. Grill the steak (over the hotter zone if using charcoal), covered, until it has good grill marks, 5 to 6 minutes. Flip and reduce the heat to medium if using a gas grill or transfer the steak to the

cooler part of the charcoal fire. Cook, covered, until the steak is done to your liking, 4 to 5 minutes for medium rare (cut into the steak to check). Transfer to a large cutting board, brush with about a third of the sesame sauce, and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes.

While the steak rests, clean and oil the grill grates, set the scallions on the grill (over the cooler zone if using charcoal), and cook until they have good grill marks, 2 to 4 minutes. Flip and cook until they're tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a large platter and drizzle with a couple of tablespoons of the sesame sauce.

Slice the steak thinly and serve with the scallions, a drizzle of the remaining sesame sauce, and a sprinkling of sesame seeds.

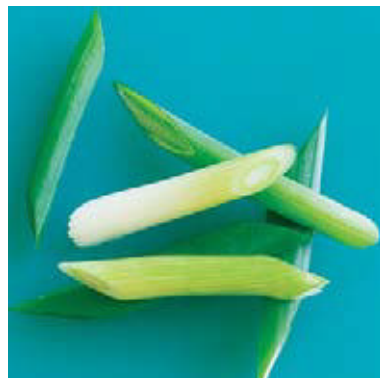


Scallion basics

Buying: Choose scallions with full white bulbs and firm green tops. Avoid scallions with soggy or browned green parts—they're past their prime.

Trimming: Remove a couple of inches from the green tops, which often have a scraggly texture. Rinse scallions under cold running water and pull off any bruised or slimy green leaves. Cut off and discard the root end, or trim it if using whole scallions.

Storing: Wrap whole, trimmed scallions in a paper towel and put them in a zip-top bag in the refrigerator. They will keep for up to a week.



Cut into 2-inch pieces and stir-fry or sauté

For quick stir-frying and sautéing, you can use both white and green parts.

More ideas: Make a simple pasta sauce by sautéing scallions and mixing them with cream, Parmigiano, and plenty of black pepper. Or try a vegetarian stir-fry with scallions, thinly sliced zucchini, Japanese eggplant, and mushrooms. I also sear strips of skirt steak with green peppers, scallions, and a splash of Worcestershire sauce and stuff it all into a bulky roll along with some Swiss cheese.

Pork Lo Mein with Seared Scallions & Shiitakes

Serves three to four.

You can usually find Chinese noodles in the produce section of the supermarket.

- ¾ lb. boneless pork country-style ribs, cut into ¼-inch-wide strips**
- 2½ Tbs. soy sauce; more to taste**
- 2 Tbs. dry sherry**
- 1 tsp. cornstarch**
- 2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. kosher salt**
- 9 oz. fresh Chinese noodles**
- 5 Tbs. canola or peanut oil**
- 6 oz. scallions (14 to 16 medium), trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces**
- 3½ to 4 oz. shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps thinly sliced (2 cups)**
- 1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced**
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**
- 3 cups thinly sliced napa cabbage (about 6 oz.)**
- 2 cups mung bean sprouts, rinsed**
- 2 tsp. Asian sesame oil**

In a medium bowl, toss the pork with 1 Tbs. of the soy sauce, 1 Tbs. of the sherry, the cornstarch, and ¼ tsp. of the salt. Refrigerate for at least 15 minutes and up to 1 hour.

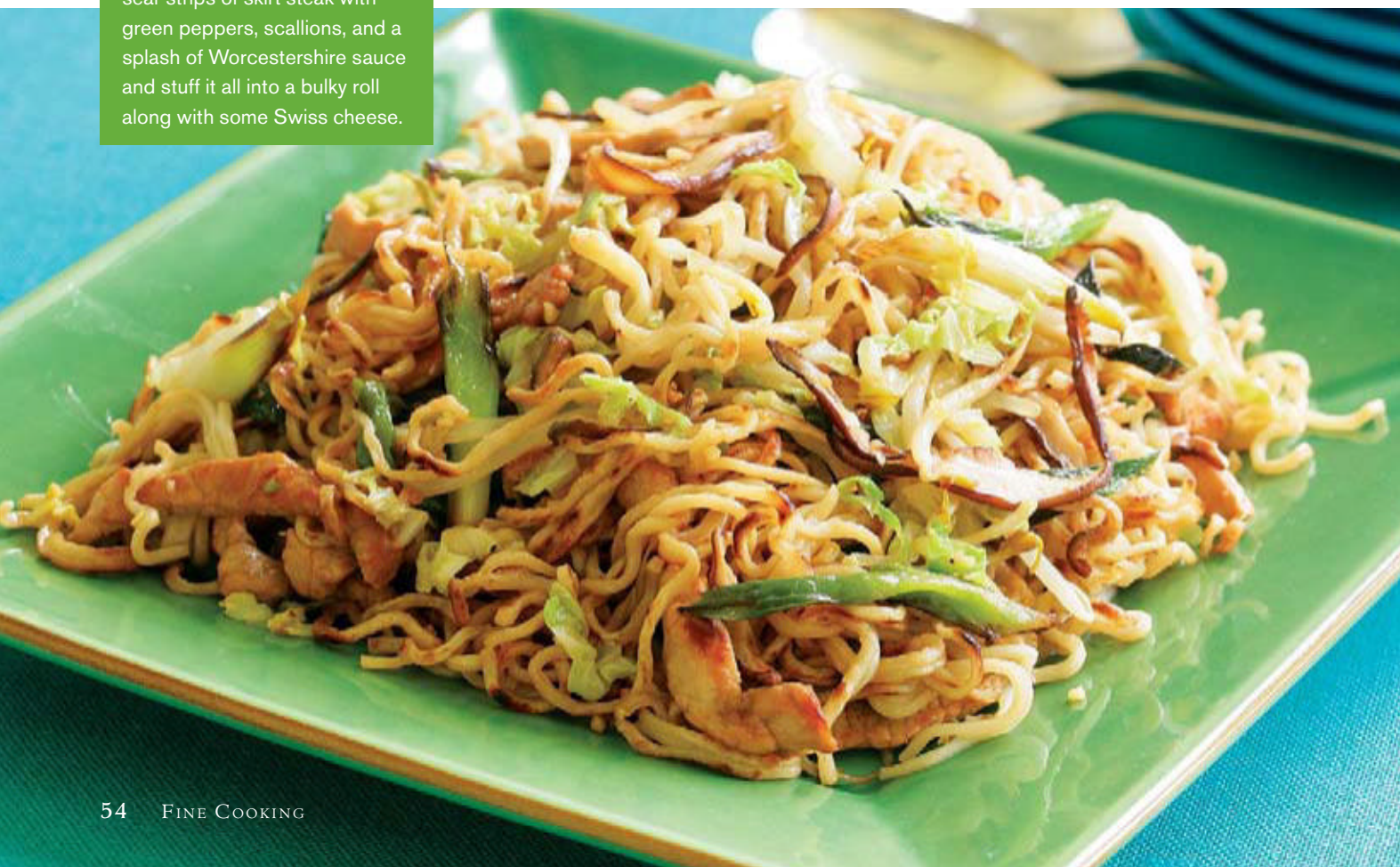
Bring 2 quarts of water to a boil in a large pot. Add 2 Tbs. of the salt and cook the noodles, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 3 minutes. Drain in a colander and run under

cold water until the noodles cool to about room temperature. Turn the noodles out onto a baking sheet lined with paper towels to dry.

Heat 1½ Tbs. of the oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the noodles and cook, tossing occasionally, until golden and slightly crisp, about 6 minutes. Meanwhile, replace the damp paper towels on the baking sheet with dry ones. When golden, transfer the noodles to the dry towels.

Heat 1½ Tbs. of the oil in the nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Add the pork and cook, tossing often, until browned and just cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate or bowl. Pour the remaining 2 Tbs. oil into the skillet and then add the scallions, mushrooms, and ¼ tsp. of the salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the ginger, garlic, and pepper flakes and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 30 to 60 seconds. Add the cabbage, bean sprouts, and the remaining ½ tsp. salt. Cook, stirring often, until the cabbage just starts to soften, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the noodles and pork to the pan and cook, stirring, until heated through, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the remaining 1½ Tbs. soy sauce, the remaining 1 Tbs. sherry, and the sesame oil and cook, tossing the ingredients, for 1 minute more. Serve immediately. Add more soy sauce to taste or pass the soy sauce at the table.





Slice thinly and cook slowly as an aromatic flavor base

Use only the white and light-green parts, as the dark-green ends wilt and overcook when simmered for a long time.

More ideas: Use scallions instead of leeks to add depth and sweetness to a creamy potato soup. Or use scallions to start a braise of chicken thighs in a spicy Szechuan sauce or as a base for a simple Italian seafood stew with sausage, tomatoes, and clams.

White or green: What's the difference?

Scallions' dark-green ends have a delicate sharpness reminiscent of chives and a light, crisp texture, but they wilt and discolor when cooked too long. The white parts have an oniony punch, and because their texture is more substantial, they withstand longer cooking times. In general, scallions cook pretty quickly when sautéed, grilled, roasted, or even braised, so you can use both the white and green parts. But when cooking them for a longer time (as an aromatic base for soups or stews, for example) it's best to use only the white and light-green parts.



Summer Corn Chowder with Scallions, Bacon & Potatoes

*Yields about 5½ cups;
serves six as a first course.*

5 ears fresh corn
7 oz. scallions (about 20 medium)
3 slices bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 jalapeño, cored, seeded, and finely diced
1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper
3½ cups low-salt chicken broth
1 large Yukon Gold potato (8 to 9 oz.), peeled and cut into ½-inch dice (about 1½ cups)
1½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme
2 Tbs. heavy cream

Husk the corn and cut off the kernels. Reserve two of the corn cobs and discard the others. Trim and thinly slice the scallions, keeping the dark-green parts separate from the white and light-green parts.

Cook the bacon in a 3- or 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat until browned and crisp, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a paper-towel-lined plate. Pour off

and discard all but about 1 Tbs. of the bacon fat. Return the pan to medium heat and add the butter. When the butter is melted, add the white and light-green scallions and the jalapeño, salt, and a few grinds of black pepper. Cook, stirring, until the scallions are very soft, about 3 minutes.

Add the broth, corn, corn cobs, potatoes, and thyme and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer until the potatoes are completely tender, about 15 minutes. Discard the corn cobs.

Transfer 1 cup of the broth and vegetables to a blender and purée. Return the purée to the pot and stir in the cream and all but ⅓ cup of the scallion greens. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for a couple of minutes to wilt the scallions and blend the flavors. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve sprinkled with the bacon and reserved scallions.

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

Fresh from the Sea, A Thai Classic

Bright, tangy flavors and perfectly cooked seafood come together in this refreshing, summery salad



BY NANCIE McDERMOTT

When I make the Thai seafood salad *yum talay*, I'm always amazed at how simple it is to gather Thailand's bright, inviting flavors into one gorgeous dish. For me, it's a quick virtual excursion to the seaside town of Hua Hin, where I first tasted this brilliant dish. I love its playful mix of flavors: the natural sweetness of fresh seafood, the breezy notes of cilantro and mint, and the sharp accent of lime juice against a little sizzle of chile heat.

In Thai cuisine, a *yum* is a hearty dish consisting mostly of meat, fish, or seafood, tossed just before serving with a simple mixture of fish sauce, fresh or dried chiles, lime juice, and herbs and often served atop a bed of salad greens. Unlike Thai curries, soups, chile sauces, and stir-fries, which are meant to be flavorful components of a rice-centered meal, a *yum* is a stand-alone dish, perfect for a light main course or even an appetizer. The word *yum* refers to the action of combining

an array of hot and tangy ingredients, and *talay* is the Thai word for ocean; thus, the mixed seafood version is called *yum talay*.

For this dish, the classic preparation is to cook the seafood just before dressing it, so that the salad is at room temperature when it's served. But if you want to cook the seafood ahead, you can chill it and take it out of the refrigerator 20 to 30 minutes before serving. Then dress the salad and sprinkle it with a handful of fresh cilantro and mint.

Thai Seafood Salad (*Yum Talay*)

Serves four as a light main course
or six as an appetizer.

This dish is easy to pull together, but it does require a little organization and prep. First cook the seafood, then make the dressing, and finally *yum* (or mix) the dressing and seafood right before serving—this is the key to keeping the vibrant flavors of this signature Thai dish distinct.

- 6 Tbs. fresh lime juice (from 2 limes)**
- 4½ Tbs. fish sauce**
- 1½ Tbs. granulated sugar**
- 2 tsp. finely chopped unseeded fresh hot green chiles (like serrano or jalapeño)**
- 2 tsp. finely chopped garlic (2 medium cloves)**
- 3 Tbs. thinly sliced shallot (1 large)**
- ⅓ cup thinly sliced scallions (4 to 5, white and green parts)**
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro**
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh mint**
- 2 cups bite-size pieces of Boston lettuce, rinsed and spun dry (1 large head)**
- 4 cups cooked seafood (see instructions at right)**
- ½ cup sliced English cucumber (halve cucumber lengthwise and slice into ¼-inch-thick half-moons)**
- ½ cup halved cherry or grape tomatoes**

Make the dressing: In a medium-large bowl, combine the lime juice, fish sauce, sugar, chiles, and garlic. Stir to dissolve the sugar and combine everything well. Set aside, along with the shallots, scallions, cilantro, and mint for mixing just before serving.

Assemble the salad: Arrange the lettuce on a large serving platter or on individual serving plates as a bed for the seafood.

Transfer the cooked seafood to the bowl containing the lime-juice dressing. Add the shallots and use your hands or a wooden spoon to gently toss everything well. Add the scallions, cilantro, and mint and mix well again. Scoop the seafood onto the platter or serving plates with a slotted spoon. Toss the cucumber and tomato in the dressing remaining in the bowl and scatter around the seafood. Drizzle any remaining dressing from the bowl over the salad, especially over any lettuce not covered by the seafood. Serve immediately.

Wine Suggestion: Try a light, crisp, off-dry Riesling like the 2005 Mönchhof Estate Riesling, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, \$14, or the 2005 Selbach-Oster Riesling Kabinett, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, \$14.



whole
mint

whole
cilantro

coarsely chopped herbs

In some Thai dishes, like soups and curries, herb sprigs and leaves are often left whole. But for a yum, the herbs are chopped coarsely at the last minute, so their flavor won't have time to fade.

Cooked Seafood for Thai Salad

Yields about 4 cups.

You can find frozen cleaned squid in 1-lb. packages in the freezer section. Some markets have thawed cleaned squid on ice at the seafood counter.

24 small mussels

1 Tbs. table salt

¾ lb. medium (51 to 60 per lb.) fresh shrimp, peeled and deveined

½ lb. cleaned squid, bodies sliced crosswise into ¼-inch rings and tentacles cut in half if large

½ lb. sea scallops or bay scallops

¼ lb. fresh or pasteurized jumbo lump crabmeat

Scrub the mussels well under running water and pull off any "beards." Discard any mussels that don't close tightly when tapped on the counter. Put closed mussels in a medium saucepan. Add about ½ cup water, just enough to cover the bottom of the pan by about ¼ inch. Cover and set over high heat. Bring to a rolling boil and cook until the shells have opened, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, transfer to a plate, and let stand until cool enough to handle. Discard any unopened ones. Remove the cooked mussels from their shells and put in a medium bowl; discard the shells and cooking liquid.

To cook the remaining seafood, bring a 3-qt. saucepan of water to a

rolling boil over high heat. Add the salt and let the water return to a boil.

Pour the shrimp into the boiling water and cook until the largest one is pink on the outside, opaque on the inside, and just cooked through, about 2 minutes. The water may not return to the boil before they are done. Scoop them out with a slotted spoon and drop into the bowl with the mussels.

After the water returns to a rolling boil, add the squid and cook just until they become firm and the rings turn bright white, about 1 minute. Scoop them out and drop them into the bowl along with the shrimp and mussels.

When the water returns to a rolling boil, cook the scallops until just cooked through and no longer translucent inside, 1 to 2 minutes for bay scallops, 2 to 3 minutes for sea scallops. Scoop them out and drop into the bowl as well (if using sea scallops, you may want to halve or quarter them first).

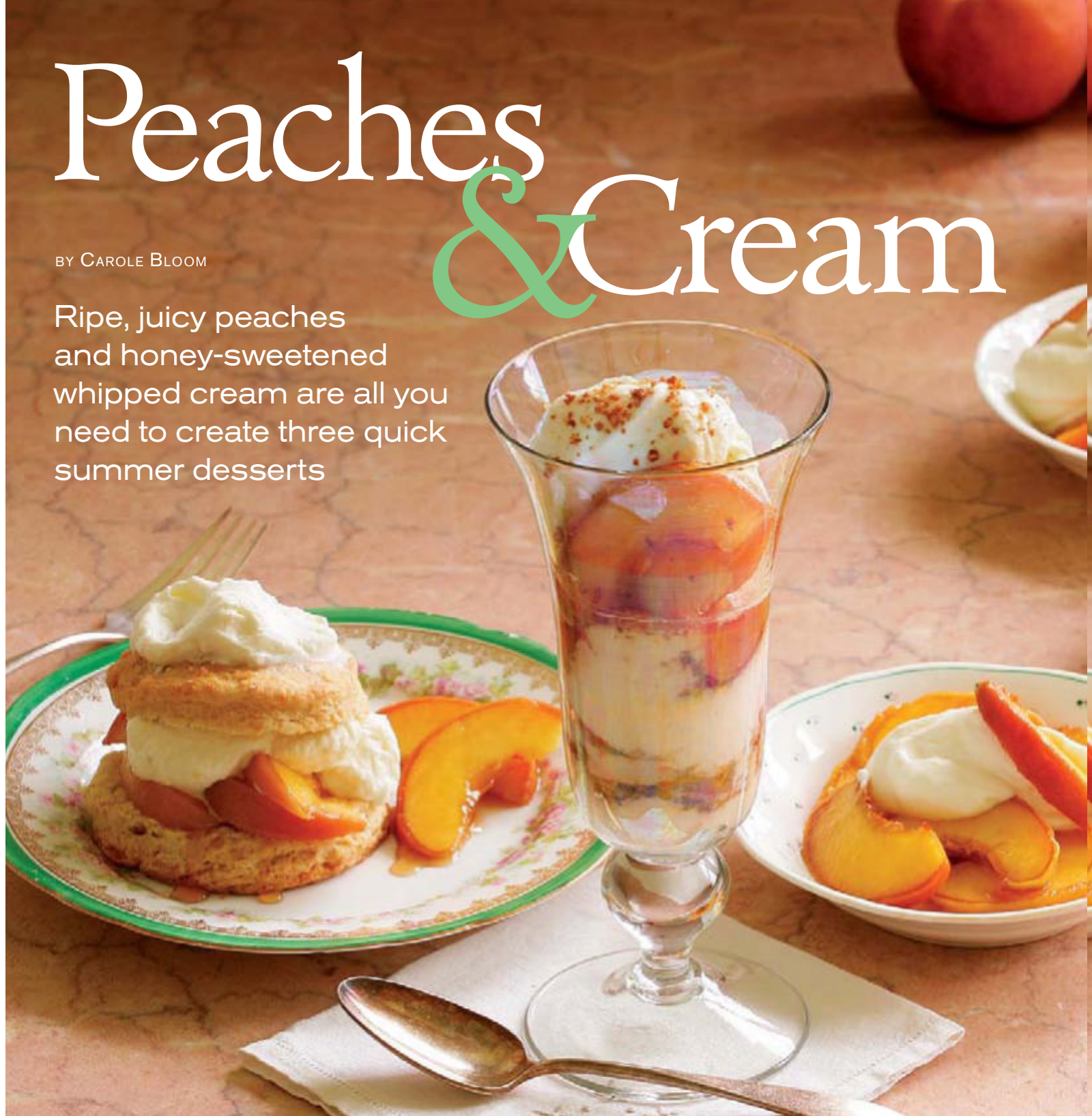
Add the lump crabmeat chunks to the bowl of seafood. Set the seafood aside on the counter while you prepare the dressing and other ingredients for the salad. Or, if making more than 30 minutes ahead, cover and refrigerate for up to 4 hours. Let sit at room temperature for 20 to 30 minutes before dressing.

A former Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand, Nancie McDermott is a cooking teacher and cookbook author specializing in the cuisines of Southeast Asia. ♦

Peaches & Cream

BY CAROLE BLOOM

Ripe, juicy peaches and honey-sweetened whipped cream are all you need to create three quick summer desserts



When peaches are at their peak, it's hard to argue with fresh peach desserts. Oh, I love pies, cobblers, and crisps, but there's something about ripe, juicy peaches that calls for a simple preparation—and it doesn't get much simpler than peaches and cream. With a couple of twists, you can transform these two components into three delightful desserts.

First, focus on flavor. Instead of serving the peaches plain, I like to marinate them briefly in a flavorful syrup made of brown sugar and amaretto. The syrup boosts the peaches' flavor and juiciness without masking their inherent charms. And instead of sweetening the whipped cream with plain old sugar, try honey; it's a minor substitution that always makes a big impact, not only

because it's surprising but also because the floral notes of honey harmonize wonderfully with the flavor of the peaches.

Then think about presentation. Once you've got marinated peaches and honey whipped cream on hand, there are several ways to serve them. The most straight-forward option is to spoon peach slices into a dish and top them with a dollop of fluffy



Peaches & Cream Dessert

Serves four.

This simple dessert is the perfect ending to a backyard summer meal.

1 recipe Marinated Peaches (at far right)
½ recipe Honey Whipped Cream (at right)

Reserve four peach slices and divide the rest among four small serving bowls or custard cups. Top each with a large spoonful (about ⅓ cup) of the honey whipped cream. Garnish each with a reserved peach slice and serve immediately.

whipped cream—always delicious, and there's nothing to it. But when the occasion calls for something a little more elaborate, you can sandwich the peaches and cream between tender shortcake biscuits (I've provided a recipe on p. 61) or layer them with cookie crumbs in a pretty glass to make a parfait. Neither option is difficult, and the results are that much more impressive.



Honey Whipped Cream

Yields about 3 cups.

I prefer a delicately flavored honey, such as orange blossom or clover, for this recipe because I don't want the whipped cream to outshine the peaches. If making a half recipe, use a hand-held mixer.

1½ cups cold heavy cream
5 Tbs. honey

Pour the heavy cream into the chilled bowl of an electric stand mixer or into a large chilled mixing bowl. Use the wire whisk attachment on the stand mixer or a hand-held mixer to whip the cream on medium speed until it begins to thicken slightly.

Turn the mixer off and add the honey. If necessary, scrape down the sides of the mixing bowl to push the honey into the cream. Whip the cream on medium-high speed until it holds soft peaks. Use right away.

Marinated Peaches

Yields about 2 cups.

The deep flavor of brown sugar in this syrup is the perfect complement to fresh peaches. You can make the syrup a couple of weeks ahead and refrigerate it, tightly covered. Don't add the peaches too far ahead, though, as they will turn brown after a couple of hours in the marinade.

½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1 Tbs. amaretto
4 large ripe peaches (about 1½ lb.)

Combine the sugar and ¼ cup water in a small heavy-based saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from the heat and let the sugar syrup cool. Stir in the amaretto.

Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Fill a large bowl with ice water. Using a small, sharp knife, cut a small X in the pointed end of each peach. Plunge the peaches into the boiling water for 1 minute. With a slotted spoon, remove the peaches from the water and put them into the bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. When the peaches are cool enough to handle, use a small sharp knife to gently peel the skin off the peaches, starting at the X. If the skins don't peel off easily, return the peaches to the boiling water for another 30 to 60 seconds.

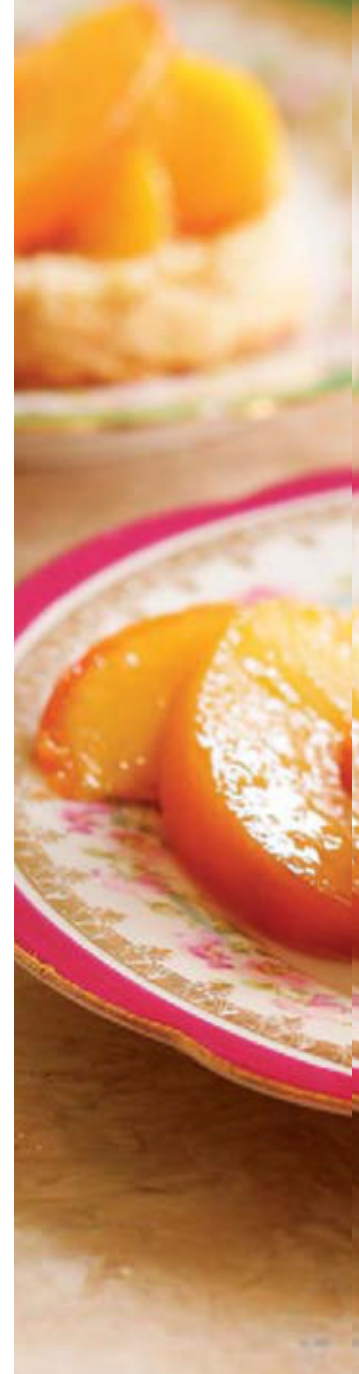
Halve the peaches lengthwise and remove the pits. Slice each half lengthwise into ½-inch-thick slices and put them in a medium bowl. Pour the amaretto sugar syrup over the peaches and stir gently to coat completely. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and let the peaches marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours before using.

EASY FLAVOR VARIATIONS:

Instead of the amaretto, stir peach schnapps, Grand Marnier, Cointreau, or a dessert wine, such as Muscat (Moscato), Muscat Canelli, or Sauternes into the brown-sugar syrup.

For deeper flavor, replace the light brown sugar with dark brown.

For lighter flavor, replace the light brown sugar with granulated.



Peaches & Cream Parfait

Serves four.

This dessert looks pretty served in stemmed goblets, tall water glasses, or martini glasses that hold $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups.

1 recipe Honey Whipped Cream
(p. 59)

1 almond biscotti or 2 amaretti
cookies, crushed in a food
processor or by hand

1 recipe Marinated Peaches (p. 59)

Use a large spoon or a pastry bag fitted with a large open tip to fill each goblet or glass about a quarter full with the honey whipped cream. Sprinkle a little of the biscotti or amaretti crumbs evenly over the whipped cream. Top with a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the marinated peaches. Repeat. Garnish with a dollop of cream and a sprinkle of any remaining crumbs. Serve immediately.



Peaches & Cream Shortcakes

Serves eight.

1 recipe Cream Shortcake Biscuits (at right)

1 recipe Marinated Peaches (p. 59)

1 recipe Honey Whipped Cream (p. 59)

Using a serrated knife, slice each biscuit in half horizontally. Set the bottom half on an individual serving plate and spoon about one-eighth of the marinated peaches, a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, over the biscuit. Cover the peaches with a generous spoonful of whipped cream. Put the top of the biscuit on the cream. Drop a small dollop of whipped cream on the biscuit top, if you wish. Repeat with the remaining biscuits. If you have any peach slices left, arrange them around the plates. Serve immediately.

Cream Shortcake Biscuits

Yields eight $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch round biscuits.

These buttery biscuits are the perfect platform for peaches and cream. Sprinkling the tops of the shortcake biscuits with demerara sugar before baking gives them a nice crunchy texture.

9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling and cutting the biscuits
2 Tbs. light brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. table salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground nutmeg, preferably freshly grated
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, chilled in the freezer for 15 minutes
1 cup plus 1 tsp. heavy whipping cream
1 Tbs. demerara sugar

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment or a nonstick liner.

Put the flour, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, and nutmeg in a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Pulse briefly to blend.

Cut the butter into small pieces and add to the food processor. Pulse until the butter is cut into pieces the size of large bread-crumbs, 6 to 8 pulses.

With the food processor running, immediately pour 1 cup of the cream through the feed tube and process just until the ingredients are moistened.

Turn the mixture out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead a few times just until smooth. Pat the dough into a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick circle or rectangle. Dip a $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch round plain-edge biscuit cutter in flour and then cut straight down through the dough to form the biscuits. (Dip the cutter in flour before cutting each biscuit and don't twist the cutter, because it will seal the edges and keep the shortcakes from rising as they bake.)

Transfer the shortcakes to the lined baking sheet, leaving at least an inch between them. Gather the scraps together, knead briefly to

Choose fragrant peaches and use them fast

My motto when choosing peaches is simple: If they smell good, they'll taste good. I like to buy peaches at my local farmers' market, but you can find good ones in many grocery stores as well. Look for unblemished peaches that aren't too soft. When you have perfectly ripe peaches, enjoy them within a couple of days. Don't wash them until you're ready to use them or they're likely to develop mold.

Occasionally, imperfect peaches may be all that's available. If they're underripe, you can ripen them by simply leaving them out on the counter and turning them daily so they're evenly exposed to light and air. And if they're not quite as fragrant and juicy as you'd like, they'll still be fine to use for these desserts because the marinade will enhance their flavor.

smooth the dough, and shape into a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick circle or rectangle. Cut out more shortcakes. Repeat as often as necessary to use most of the dough (there will be a little left over).

With a pastry brush, lightly coat the tops of the biscuits with the remaining 1 tsp. cream and then lightly sprinkle them with demerara sugar.

Bake until the bottoms are slightly golden, 14 to 16 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and let the biscuits cool completely on a rack before serving.

Cookbook author Carole Bloom's latest book is The Essential Baker: The Comprehensive Guide to Baking with Chocolate, Fruit, Nuts, Spices, and Other Ingredients. ♦

what we mean by

Coarsely vs. finely chopped herbs

When it comes to chopped herbs, one size doesn't fit all



Coarsely chopped herbs are good for garnishing and mixing into salsas and cold salads. The leaves are chopped just enough to break them into smaller pieces and release their flavor but still large enough that some pieces have intact edges, so they're identifiable by sight rather than being anonymous chopped green bits.

Finely chopped herbs are usually best for mixing into dishes in which the flavor of the herb is more important than its appearance. Though by no means a firm rule, fresh herbs are generally added near the end of cooking, giving them enough time to infuse a dish but not so long as to overcook and muddy their flavor nuances.

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BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

Tips for chopping herbs

Choose your sharpest knife. This is crucial. A dull knife mashes and bruises; a sharp knife cuts cleanly.

Use a rocking-chopping motion by adding wrist action as you chop, rocking the knife back and forth in a slight slicing motion each time the knife comes down on the board. This motion cuts the herbs more cleanly, so the flavor stays in the herbs rather than leaking out onto the board (which happens with a dull knife and a straight up-and-down chopping motion).

Chop herbs just before using for the freshest flavor—if possible, that is. Sometimes you have to work ahead, and in these cases, chopped herbs (covered and stored in the fridge) will stay reasonably fresh tasting for several hours. Just try to avoid chopping them any sooner than necessary.



Don't husk corn until it's time to cook it

When I see people at a farmstand or grocery store husking corn before they buy it, I always have to butt in and ask if they know that what they're doing is akin to peeling bananas before buying them. The husks protect the ears of corn within, keeping them fresh and moist. Most people tell me they're husking the corn to make sure it's worm-free and fully developed, but there are ways to find good ears without husking:

Choose ears that are snugly wrapped in their husks, which should appear fresh, green, and moist. It's all right if the tassel seems a little dry at its end, but it should feel fresh around the tip of the ear.

Run your fingers along the ear, feeling the formation of the kernels through the husks. They should feel plump and densely packed in even rows. You can feel if the kernels are immature.

Look for worm holes. If you see one, move on to another ear. If you find a worm after husking the corn, it's not a big deal. Just cut it out.

Eat the corn ASAP. As sweet corn ages, its sugar turns to starch—hence the adage to have the pot of water boiling before you pick the corn. Today's varieties have been bred to slow down the sugar-to-starch conversion, but still, the sooner you eat it, the better it'll taste. Refrigeration delays the conversion, so if you must store corn, wrap unhusked ears in damp paper towels and keep them in a plastic bag in your fridge's produce bin for two to three days.

How to julienne or chop citrus zest

Most of the time, our recipes call for finely grated citrus zest, and the tool of choice for that is the ever-handly rasp-style grater, like the Microplane. But occasionally, we want the zest to be in slightly larger pieces, usually either chopped—as in the Olive, Orange & Anchovy Vinaigrette on p. 50—or in julienne strips. In either case, the tools you'll need are a vegetable peeler, a paring knife, and a chef's knife.



1 Using light pressure, remove the zest in long strips, leaving behind as much of the bitter white pith as possible.

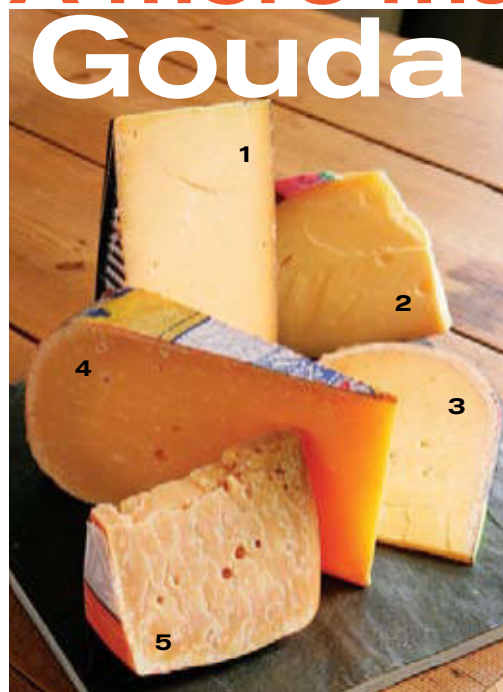


2 If there are any patches of pith on the zest, shave them off with a paring knife.



3 Stack or shingle two or three strips of zest and thinly slice them lengthwise with a sharp chef's knife to make julienne strips. If chopped zest is your goal, thinly slice the julienne strips crosswise.

A more mature Gouda



A sampling of aged Goudas:

1. Old Amsterdam (1 year)
2. Prima Donna Extra Aged (14 months)
3. Beemster Classic (2 years)
4. Roomano (4 years)
5. Roomano (5 years)

crunch from small white amino acid clusters, and its tangy flavor has nutty caramel notes. Brands to look for are Old Amsterdam, Prima Donna, and Beemster. These cheeses are wonderful with nuts and autumn fruits, as in the recipe for Arugula Salad with Pears, Prosciutto & Aged Gouda on p. 78a.

With a few more years, Gouda becomes firm and flaky, with a dark caramel color. It

has intense toffee, butterscotch, and sherry undertones with a more pronounced crunch. Look for Roomano brand (sometimes called Pradera). A little of this cheese goes a long way; enjoy a few bites with your favorite robust red or crisp fruity white wine.

Happily, we've noticed aged Goudas appearing much more frequently in supermarket cheese cases, but if there's none yet to be found in your area, see p. 72 for mail-order sources.

—Allison Ehri, test kitchen associate



What is Canadian bacon?

If you've ever eaten eggs Benedict or an Egg McMuffin, then you've had Canadian bacon. More like ham than bacon, Canadian bacon is a cured, lightly smoked pork loin. It's much leaner than regular bacon, so it's a good option for adding a slightly smoky, meaty flavor to dishes like the corn sauté on our back cover without adding a lot of extra fat. Look for it in the grocery store meat section near other smoked pork products like ham hocks and sausages. It's often sold sliced and shingled out in a vacuum-sealed package. Because it's cured and smoked, it can be eaten without further cooking, but it's better if it's heated first by sautéing, grilling, or baking.

You're probably familiar with Dutch Gouda cheese. Usually encased in red or yellow wax and aged for one to six months, young Gouda is mellow, slightly creamy, and often not very interesting. But with one to six years of aging, this mild-mannered juvenile matures into a sophisticated and complex cheese that's worth seeking out.

One- to two-year-old Gouda is somewhat firm and light honey in color. It has a slightly creamy texture that's often accented with a charming little

Pack a pint (or three) of pickles

Whether you're a home gardener or a farmers' market regular, 'tis the season for pickling and canning. For the impatient pickle fan, the two recipes here can be made as quick (refrigerator) pickles, or they may be canned for longer shelf storage. The quick pickles will be crisper, but their flavor won't be as intense.



Pickled Cauliflower with Carrots & Red Bell Pepper

Yields about 3 pints.

Serve these pickles as part of an appetizer spread with fresh tomatoes, olives, flatbread, and hummus or baba ghanoush. They're also tasty alongside grilled meats.

1 tsp. coriander seeds
1 tsp. black or brown mustard seeds
 (or substitute yellow)
½ tsp. cumin seeds
2 cups cider vinegar
5 medium cloves garlic, lightly crushed and peeled
Three ¼-inch-thick slices peeled fresh ginger
One-half small yellow onion, thinly sliced lengthwise
½ cup sugar
2 Tbs. kosher salt
1 tsp. black peppercorns
½ tsp. ground turmeric
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
One-half head cauliflower, cut into 1½- to 2-inch florets (about 4 cups)
5 medium carrots, peeled and sliced ½ inch thick on the diagonal (about 2 cups)
One-half red bell pepper, cut into large dice (about 1 cup)

Put the coriander, mustard, and cumin seeds in a small saucepan. Toast the spices over medium heat, swirling the pan occasionally, until fragrant and slightly darkened, about 2 minutes. Add the vinegar, garlic, ginger, onion, sugar, salt, peppercorns, turmeric, red pepper flakes, and 1 cup water to the toasted spices. Bring to a boil.

If quick pickling, pack the cauliflower, carrots, and bell pepper in a 2-qt. heat-resistant glass bowl or measuring cup. Pour the hot brine over the vegetables. Let cool to room temperature and then cover and refrigerate for at least 2 and up to 14 days.

If canning, pack the vegetables into clean, hot pint jars. Pour the hot brine over the vegetables, leaving ½-inch headspace. If you have extra brine, strain it and distribute the solids among the jars. Process for 10 minutes as described below. Store the pickles for at least 2 but preferably 7 days (or longer) before opening. Refrigerate after opening.

—Allison Ebri

Canning basics—keep the jars hot & pack them tight

Whether you're using our pickle recipes or one of your own favorites, follow these guidelines for safe canning.

1. Wash the jars and screw bands with hot, soapy water and rinse them well. Follow the manufacturer's directions for preparing the lids. The jars must be hot when you pack them; otherwise, the hot brine may cause them to shatter.

2. Pack the jars tightly, and then pour in the hot brine to cover the vegetables, allowing the specified amount of headspace (the space between the rim of the jar and its contents).

3. Remove air bubbles by slowly raising and lowering a chopstick or a plastic blade around the inside of the jars. This is crucial: A trapped air bubble may shatter a jar as it heats. Add more brine to cover the vegetables, if necessary.

4. Wipe the jars' rims with a damp cloth before putting on the lids. Secure the lids with screw bands tightened by hand into place.

5. Set the jars on a rack in a canner or pot that's half-filled with very hot water

(but not boiling, which may cause the jars to break). Add more hot water, if necessary, to cover the jars with 2 inches of water. Cover the pot, turn the heat on high, and bring the water to a boil. When it starts to boil (you'll have to peek), begin timing—see your recipe for processing time.

6. Remove the jars immediately when the time is up. Let them cool undisturbed for at least 12 hours. Never tighten the bands after the jars have been processed, as this could break the seal.

7. Test the seals. After the jars have cooled, gently remove the screw bands and test the seals by lifting the jar by its lid. (Do this over a towel to catch the jar if it hasn't sealed properly.)

8. Store sealed jars in a cool, dry place.

Unsealed jars should be stored in the refrigerator and used quickly.

—Adapted from *"Pickles by the Pint"* by Andrea Chesman, originally published in *Fine Cooking* #16



Spiced Pickled Beets

Yields about 3 pints.

Believe it or not, sliced pickled beets are great on a hamburger. In fact, in Australia pickled beets and even a fried egg are often served atop a burger. But if a beet burger isn't your thing, they're also nice in salads or sautéed in butter as a side dish.

8 to 9 medium-small beets, trimmed and scrubbed (about 2¼ lb.)

2 Tbs. olive or canola oil

1½ cups red-wine vinegar

One-half small red onion, thinly sliced lengthwise

⅓ cup light brown sugar

2 Tbs. kosher salt

1 tsp. yellow mustard seeds

1 tsp. fennel seeds

1 tsp. black peppercorns

½ tsp. whole allspice

Heat the oven to 400°F. Put the beets in a glass baking dish (8x8-inch works well). Drizzle them with the oil and 2 Tbs. water. Seal the pan tightly with aluminum foil and roast the beets until just soft enough to pierce

with a fork, 50 to 55 minutes.

Transfer the beets to a cutting board. When cool enough to touch, rub off their skins with paper towels and quarter them lengthwise (or cut them into sixths if they seem large).

Put the remaining ingredients and ¾ cup water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil.

If quick pickling, pack the beets in a 2-qt. heat-resistant glass bowl or measuring cup. Pour the hot brine over the beets. Let cool to room temperature and then cover and refrigerate for at least 2 and up to 14 days.

If canning, pack the beets into clean, hot pint jars. Pour the hot brine over the beets, leaving ½-inch headspace. If you have extra brine, strain it and distribute the solids among the jars. Process for 10 minutes as described at left. Store the pickles for at least 2 but preferably 7 days (or longer) before opening. Refrigerate after opening.

—Allison Ehri

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SAINT-GOBAIN ABRASIVES

Make it a malted

If you grew up in the days of the soda fountain, then you already know about malteds. For the uninitiated, a malted (or a malt) is a milk shake flavored with malted milk powder—a blend of dried milk, wheat flour, and barley malt (and sometimes sugar and other flavors depending on the brand). Barley malt, which is best known as a baking and beer brewing ingredient, is made from barley that's been germinated and roasted, causing a number of chemical and physical changes that create a distinctive sweet, “malty” flavor.

To turn a milk shake into a malted, simply add malted milk powder once the shake is nearly blended—1 tablespoon per shake is a good starting point, but you can use any amount you like. Not only does malted milk lend its unique flavor to the shake, but it also enriches and amplifies the shake's base flavor.

You can also sprinkle malted milk directly onto ice cream. The texture will be a little gritty, but it'll still taste delicious. In fact, some ice cream shops top sundaes with lots of malted milk powder and give them great names like Dusty Road or Sawdust Sundae.



Look for malted milk powder in the grocery store near the cocoa and other flavored milk mixes, or see Where to Buy It, p. 72, for a mail-order source.



Double-Chocolate Malted Milk Shake

Serves one or two.

When our chocolate ice cream Tasting Panel (p. 70) left with us with a freezer full of ice cream, we knew just what to do: make malteds. For the thickest shakes, use a dense, premium brand of ice cream, like Ben & Jerry's (our Tasting Panel winner). And if you'd rather have just a chocolate milk shake, skip the malt powder at the end.

**⅓ to ½ cup very cold whole milk;
more as needed**

**3 scoops chocolate ice cream
(about 2 oz. each), slightly
softened; more as needed**

**1 Tbs. chocolate syrup, such as
Hershey's Special Dark**

**1 Tbs. plain malted milk powder;
more to taste**

Pour the milk into the mixing cup of a milk shake mixer or hand blender or into the jar of a regular blender. Add the ice cream and chocolate syrup. Blend on high speed until smooth. The blending time depends on the machine and the temperature of the ingredients. If necessary, add more milk or ice cream to adjust to your preferred consistency. When the shake is just about smooth, briefly blend in the malted milk powder. Serve immediately in a chilled glass.

Do you need a milk shake mixer?

There's a downside to milk shakes made in a regular blender: They're usually thin and lumpy, and heat from the blender's motor can build up and melt the shake if you blend too long. Milk shake mixers address both these issues. A blending disk (or disks) at the end of a long shaft both mixes and aerates, so the shake becomes thick and smooth. And the motor is far from the blending cup, so heat isn't a problem.

We took a few milk shake mixer models for a test drive. All performed well enough, but we liked the 100-watt, 2-speed Oster Classic milk shake mixer for its modern design, relatively quiet motor, double blending disk, and safety sensor, which stops the machine if the cup is removed.

So do you need one? If milk shakes are only an occasional treat in your house, then stick with a regular blender or better yet, an immersion (hand) blender. But if you dream of whipping up luscious, thick shakes at home, then yes, you need one. The Oster costs about \$50. See Where to Buy It, p. 72, for a mail-order source.



leftovers

Grilled eggplant & pasta are made for each other

Grilled eggplant is extremely versatile, especially in a pasta salad. If you have some eggplant leftover from the “Dressing Up Grilled Eggplant” article on p. 48, try making a custom pasta salad with it and your choice of ingredients (see below). Follow our quantity guidelines for a nicely balanced salad.

Create-Your-Own Pasta Salad with Grilled Eggplant

Serves four to six as a side dish.

If you have leftover Garlic-Cumin Vinaigrette (p. 51) or Olive, Orange & Anchovy Vinaigrette (p. 50), you can use that instead of the Basic Vinaigrette.

½ lb. penne, cellentani, or rotini pasta, cooked al dente
1½ cups diced leftover Grilled Eggplant (from p. 49)
1 recipe Basic Vinaigrette (at far right)
Additional flavorings (at right)

Combine the pasta and eggplant in a large bowl. Add the vinaigrette and your choices from the additional flavor groups at right and toss. Adjust the salt, pepper, and lemon or vinegar to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Additional flavor choices:

Vegetables:

½ to ¾ cup small-diced or chopped raw vegetables

Bell pepper (any color)

Tomato

Sweet onion

1 or 2 powerful flavors:

1 to 3 anchovy filets, finely chopped

1 to 2 Tbs. capers, rinsed

⅓ cup pitted black or green olives (such as Kalamata or Manzanilla), quartered lengthwise

1 to 2 Tbs. seeded and chopped jarred pepperoncini or hot cherry peppers

Mild herbs:

¼ cup chopped

Basil

Mint

Parsley

Chives

Potent herbs:

2 tsp. finely chopped

Marjoram

Thyme

Rosemary

Oregano

Cheese:

½ cup

Finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Romano

Crumbled feta

Crumbled fresh or aged goat cheese

Diced fresh mozzarella

—Allison Ehri



Basic Vinaigrette

Yields 5 to 6 Tbs.

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 Tbs. minced shallot or

1 small clove garlic, mashed to a paste with a pinch of kosher salt

1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, or red-wine vinegar; more to taste

Pinch kosher salt; more to taste

Pinch freshly ground black pepper or crushed red pepper flakes; more to taste

Whisk all the ingredients together in small bowl.

Tasty ways to use up pickled peppers



If you have a jar of pickled peppers lurking in the back of your fridge—leftover perhaps from a recipe that called for using just one or two peppers—it's time to dig it out and use it up. Here are some mix-and-match ideas for adding pizzazz to your cooking with pickled peppers.

Jalapeños are great with beans and Mexican flavors—toss them in a bean salad or stir them into chili. The acid also adds a nice balance to mango salsa.

Stuff **sweet or hot cherry peppers** with little prosciutto-wrapped fresh mozzarella balls (bocconcini) for an hors d'oeuvre.

Pepperoncini go well with sweet vegetables like carrots, corn, roasted red bell

peppers, and tomatoes. Add them to sautés and salads made with these ingredients, or try the Angel Hair Pasta with Sautéed Cherry Tomatoes, Lemon & Tuna on p. 78a.

Banana peppers are a nice mild alternative to pepperoncini. We like to use them on sandwiches in place of pickles.

Mixed together, sliced pickled peppers make a beautiful and zesty topping for nachos and pizza. Seed and chop them to spice up mayo for a sandwich, especially tuna salad. Chopped peppers are also great sprinkled over grilled or smoked fatty fish like bluefish or mackerel. Sautéed greens love their spicy, acidic kick, too. Or mix them into the grilled eggplant pasta salad above. —Allison Ehri ♦

The Art of Grilling, Demystified

BY SARAH JAY

Die-hard grilling fanatics like to say we have an inborn need to cook over fire, that it connects us to our ancestral past. But if the act of grilling is so instinctive, why does it raise so many questions? Lid up or down? Charcoal or gas? Direct or indirect heat? Not to worry. Here we explain the science of grilling—what's really going on when you light the coals or turn on the gas—so we can all become natural-born grillers.



When & why should you use direct or indirect heat?

To some degree, your success as a griller hinges on your ability to use direct and indirect heat appropriately. Direct grilling means the food is set right over the fire. Indirect grilling means the food is set to the side of the fire, not directly over it.

To understand when and why you should use each method, it helps to think about the different types of heat transfer occurring in a grill. First, there's the very intense radiant heat emanating from the coals or gas flames. Second, the hot grill grates deliver heat by conduction. And finally, there's convection, which is the hot air circulating around the food when the lid is down.

Direct grilling uses intense radiant heat

When your food is right above the fire, the strong heat energy radiating off the coals or burners is doing most of the cooking. This type of heat is very effective at searing a steak, charring red peppers, and producing all the delicious caramelized flavors that

come from high-heat cooking. Conduction also plays a role, as the blazing hot grates are what form those nice grill marks.

The trouble with direct grilling is that it's all too easy to burn the outside of your food before the inside is fully cooked. (If you've ever tried to grill, say, a large roast or even large pieces of bone-in chicken directly over a hot fire, you've experienced this.) Think of direct grilling in the same context as broiling or even sautéing: The proximity to the heat is perfect for browning meat, and it's also ideal for cooking thin, tender items like shrimp or boneless chicken breasts. Or follow the advice of Jamie Purviance, the author of *Weber's Real Grilling*: Use direct heat for anything that will cook through in less than 20 minutes: hamburgers, thinner chops, pork tenderloin, and most vegetables.

Indirect grilling relies on convection

There are a few ways to set up a grill for indirect cooking, but in all cases, your food goes over an area of the grate with-

out fire beneath it. When you close the lid and open the vents, cool air is sucked into the grill, forcing the hot air inside to circulate. This movement of hot air cooks the food more quickly and evenly. In effect, you've turned your grill into a convection oven, with the air vents acting as the fan.

Indirect grilling is the way to go for large, tough, or fatty meats like whole chicken, spare ribs, pork shoulder, or anything that would likely burn before it cooked through over direct heat. Fattier meats have fewer flare-ups when grilled indirectly; since the fat isn't dripping onto flames, it won't ignite.

Of course, you can combine both methods for the best of both worlds. For example, you could start a very thick pork chop over the fire to develop grill marks and a nicely browned crust and then slide it over an area with no heat to finish grilling indirectly, taking advantage of the milder, more even heat of convection.

Why do foods stick to the grill?

You can blame the proteins in meat or fish for your troubles with sticking. When proteins are heated, they first unfold into long strands and then they start to coil up again into new, tighter forms (a process called coagulation). Initially, these unfolded strands of proteins will bond with the metal grates. But as they continue to coagulate, the proteins interact and bond more with themselves than with the grill grate. That's the moment you're waiting for, because at that point, they'll more or less naturally release from the grill. So the bottom line is that beef, chicken, pork, and fish will always be prone to some sticking, but if you can resist the urge to flip or move them too soon, you'll get a cleaner release.

Also, be sure the grates are hot and clean, and don't be shy about oiling the food. Hot grates are key because the heat seals up microscopic pores in the metal, where proteins would otherwise have a chance to bond. Cleaning the grates with a brush removes any cooked-on protein residue, which can also exacerbate sticking. And coating the food with oil inhibits sticking because oil acts as a lubricant (you can oil the grates if you want, but it's more efficient to coat the food).

Sugary sauces can also cause sticking due to the sugars caramelizing and bonding to the metal grates. If you're basting with a sweet sauce, try brushing it on toward the end of cooking to minimize the problem.

Is there a flavor difference between charcoal & gas?

A provocative question, and one that elicits passionate responses from both sides of the grill patio. You might assume that charcoal infuses food with lots of wood-smoke flavor—after all, charcoal is manufactured from wood. But it's not exactly true. Charcoal does produce a good deal of smoke when it's igniting, but by the time the coals have reached grilling temperatures, the smoke has subsided considerably, if not completely. So perhaps you'll get a hint of woody flavor in your food, but unless you toss in some wood chips (which you can also do on a gas grill), it's not likely to be dramatic.

Also, both the degree and quality of smoke can vary widely among types and brands of charcoal. For example, lump hardwood charcoal (made solely from charred wood) and compressed charcoal briquettes (which consist of wood powder, coal, and starch) produce different types of smoky flavors.

So what's actually producing that quintessential flavor that most of us associate with grilled food? It isn't wood smoke. In large part, it's the result of fats and juices dripping onto coals or metal bars, which transforms them into tiny particles that waft back up and coat the food. And you can get that delicious flavor from both charcoal and gas.

For a little more smoky flavor from your charcoal grill, spread the coals in an even layer but light them only on one side. The fire will spread as you're cooking, igniting new coals and continually producing smoke.

Should you grill with the lid up or down?

When you're using indirect heat, the grill must be covered to create the convective atmosphere, as explained at far left.

When direct grilling, you can have the lid open or closed, but grilling pros seem to prefer to keep it closed. The main advantage is that food cooks more quickly and evenly since it's receiving both radiant and convective heat. "The more you lift the lid, the longer it takes to cook," says Elizabeth Karmel, a grilling guru and author of *Taming the Flame*. More reasons to keep the lid on: You'll get fewer flare-ups since there is less air available to fuel them, you'll trap more smoke (if you're using wood chips), and you might even get deeper grill marks since the grates will be a bit hotter.

Sarah Jay, the former executive editor of *Fine Cooking*, is a contributing editor. ♦

Chocolate Ice Cream

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

We've sipped vinegar from the bottle, sampled mayos straight from the jar, and chowed down sauceless whole-wheat pastas. So for this issue's Tasting Panel, we decided to reward ourselves with something sweet—chocolate ice cream. It's summer after all, and chocolate ice cream is a great thing to have in the freezer to make milk shakes (see the recipe in *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 62) or ice cream sandwiches, or just to savor on its own.

But with all the brands available, which are worth stashing? To find out, we asked 12 *Fine Cooking*

staffers to participate in a blind tasting of five widely available brands of chocolate ice cream. While flavors varied, when it came to texture, the ice creams clearly fell into two categories: creamy and dense or light and airy, depending on how much air was pumped into them during churning (more air makes fluffier ice cream). What was less clear was which style our tasters preferred. Some were partial to the denser ice creams, while others liked the airier ones better. That's why both are in the top three. Read on for a rundown of the results.



Top Pick

BEN & JERRY'S

\$4.19 (16 oz.)

This ice cream got high scores for its perfectly smooth, dense, creamy texture ("reminds me of gelato," wrote one taster) and its intensely rich, well-balanced bitter-sweet chocolate flavor.

Runners-up

Ice creams are numbered in order of preference; prices will vary.



1 CIAO BELLA

\$4.99 (16 oz.)

"Now we're talking," said one panelist about this dark and creamy ice cream. (It's called gelato, but its ingredients are similar to those in the other ice creams we sampled. See the sidebar opposite.) Tasters liked its smooth, rich mouth-feel as well as its bittersweet flavor with hints of nuts, although a few noticed a slightly acidic note.



2 EDY'S GRAND

\$5.79 (1.79 qt.)

While definitely in the light and airy category, this ice cream (called Edy's on the East Coast and Dreyer's west of the Rockies) was not overly puffed up. Most tasters praised its deep chocolate flavor with cinnamon undertones and lingering bittersweet notes. A few thought it was a little too sweet and slightly sticky.



3 BREYERS

\$5.99 (1.75 qt.)

This soft, airy ice cream had a decent chocolate flavor, but several panelists found it wanting in richness. Its slightly grainy and unappealingly icy texture also disappointed many.



4 HÄAGEN-DAZS

\$3.89 (16 oz.)

This creamy, pleasantly dense ice cream ("it was the slowest to melt," noted one taster) disappointed big time in the flavor department. The chocolate was too bland and had a slightly earthy aftertaste.

You say gelato, I say ice cream

We were curious about the difference between gelato and ice cream, so we posed the question to Il Laboratorio del Gelato owner Jon Snyder. It turns out there is no clear-cut difference. "The way I see it," he says, "gelato is the Italian word for ice cream." There isn't one way to make gelato, just as there isn't one way to make ice cream. In the South of Italy, for example, gelato tends to be icier, while in the North it's creamier, with a lot more egg yolks.

That said, a couple of general rules apply. Gelato tends to have less cream and more milk than ice cream, so it has a denser texture because less air is whipped into it (cream incorporates more air than milk). Also, gelato is churned more slowly and served at slightly higher temperatures than ice cream, making it particularly smooth and creamy. Egg yolks can be used in both gelato and ice cream.

splurge

In a league of its own



Our panel's top ice creams (at left) are fine everyday treats, and they'd make tasty milk shakes, too, but if you're looking for something truly special, you'll want Il Laboratorio del Gelato's dark chocolate ice cream in your freezer. To say that it's smooth and creamy is almost an understatement. This ice cream is luxuriously rich and silky—oh, so silky—like the deepest, richest chocolate mousse with an intense, perfectly bittersweet chocolate flavor that will knock your socks off.

Il Laboratorio del Gelato ice creams are available in select stores in New York City or by mail order at LaboratorioDelGelato.com (\$60 for four 18-ounce containers, plus shipping).

Go, organic!

Green & Black's organic dark chocolate is a favorite here at *Fine Cooking*. So when we found out the company had plans to launch Green & Black's organic chocolate ice cream, we couldn't wait to taste it. This is a dense, rich, satisfying ice cream with a powerful dark-chocolate flavor and a big bittersweet finish, just like its 70% chocolate bars. Green & Black's organic chocolate ice cream is available at Whole Foods Markets and other specialty food stores for \$4.49 a pint.



Winner:

Best overall Santoku,
Wall Street Journal
Catalog Critic (7/1/05)



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From Our Test Kitchen, p. 62

Though aged Goudas seem to be appearing in more supermarket cheese sections, they may not be in your market yet. Good mail-order sources for aged Gouda include Artisanal Cheese.com (877-797-1200), MurraysCheese.com (888-692-4339), and Formaggio Kitchen.com (888-212-3224).

To purchase the Oster Classic chrome milk shake mixer (model 6627), visit Amazon.com, where it sells for about \$50.

For malted milk powder, visit CtlColfax.com (800-962-5227), where a 1-pound canister sells for \$15.50, including shipping and handling.



In Season, p. 18

Seeds for pickling and slicing cucumbers are widely available on seed racks and from seed catalogs. You may have to order English cucumber seeds. A couple of good sources are CooksGarden.com (800-457-9703) and SuperSeeds.com (207-926-3400).

Grilled Chicken Thighs, p. 30

Look to your local Asian market or go to OrientalPantry.com (978-264-4576) for sambal oelek, an Asian chile paste (8 ounces for \$2.09), and five-spice powder (4 ounces for \$1.49).

No-Cook Tomato Sauce, p. 38

If you're interested in growing your own tomatoes, you can find seeds at garden centers or at TomatoGrowers.com (888-478-7333). Genovese basil is available at many farmers' markets, or you can buy seeds at Richters.com (800-668-4372).



Grilled Bread, p. 40

To turn bread on the grill, Elizabeth Karmel recommends using a pair of locking tongs. They're available at kitchenwares stores, or visit OXO.com (800-545-4411), which sells them in various sizes and at prices ranging from \$8.99 to \$12.99.

Mexican-Style Steaks, p. 44

You can find Oaxaca, cotija, and anejo cheeses as well as ancho chile powder, chipotles en adobo, and dried ancho and pasilla chiles in many well-stocked supermarkets and in hispanic markets. Igourmet.com (877-446-8763) carries varieties of these Mexican cheeses, which range from about \$8 to \$11 a pound.

For all of the chiles, visit TheCmc Company.com (800-262-2780); ancho chile powder sells for \$6.75 for 4 ounces, chipotles en adobo are \$5.25 for 7 ounces, dried ancho chiles are \$9.50 for 6 ounces, and pasilla chiles are \$12.75 for 6 ounces.

Peaches & Cream, p. 58

The Cream Shortcake Biscuits get a sprinkling of demerara sugar just before baking. It's available in well-stocked supermarkets, or try mail-ordering it at Igourmet.com (877-446-8763), where a 1-pound bag sells for \$3.99.

Quick & Delicious, p. 78a

Chipotles are dried, smoked jalapeños, and in any form they add an intriguing depth to dishes. McCormick packages ground chipotle, which is available in supermarkets, and SpiceHunter.com (800-444-3061) sells crushed chipotle (\$7.88 per 1.85-ounce jar), which would be a fine substitute in the Farmers' Market Quesadillas if you add just a bit more than you would of the ground chipotle. ♦

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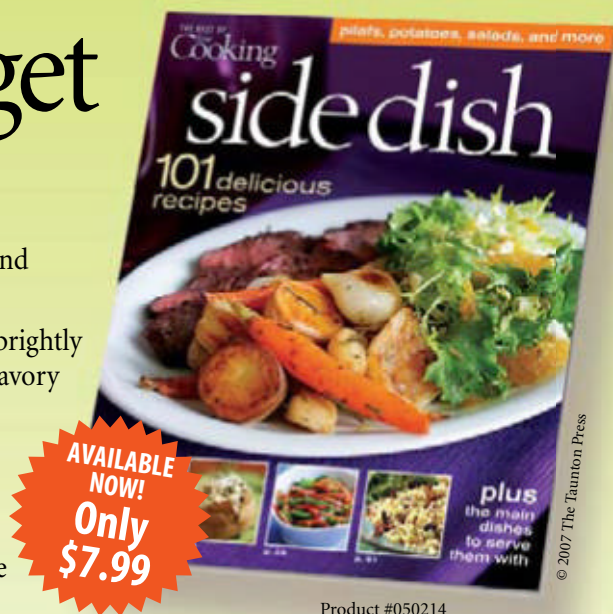
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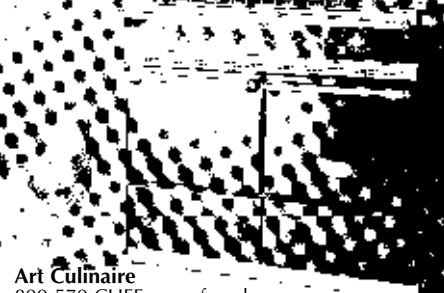


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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
In Season	18												
Green Gazpacho		380	300	3	17	34	4.5	24	3.5	0	640	4	based on 6 servings
Chicken Thighs on the Grill	30												
Grilled Tandoori-Style Chicken Thighs		300	150	34	2	16	4	6	4	125	240	5	based on 6 servings
Grilled Five-Spice Chicken Thighs w/ Soy-Vinegar Sauce		340	180	35	6	20	4.5	8	6	125	690	0	based on 6 servings
Indonesian Grilled Chicken Thighs w/ Mango-Peanut Salsa		470	250	38	18	28	6	11	8	125	600	3	based on 6 servings
Grilled Rosemary Chicken Thighs w/ Dipping Sauce		380	170	34	19	19	4.5	7	5	125	500	0	w/ 2 Tbs. sauce/serving
Corn Sautés	34												
Corn, Sweet Onion & Zucchini Sauté w/ Fresh Mint		180	90	4	24	10	4	4	1	15	290	4	based on 4 servings
Corn & Mushroom Sauté w/ Leeks & Pancetta		300	210	5	21	23	10	10	2	45	490	3	based on 4 servings
Corn Sauté w/ Ginger, Garlic & Fresh Cilantro		160	90	3	19	10	4	4	1	15	290	3	based on 4 servings
No-Cook Tomato Sauce	38												
No-Cook Tomato Sauce (<i>Salsa Cruda</i>)		480	180	12	62	20	3	13	2.5	0	440	5	w/ pasta
No-Cook Tomato Sauce w/ Cheese		540	230	17	63	25	7	14	2.5	20	680	5	w/ pasta
No-Cook Tomato Sauce w/ Basil Pesto		730	410	15	65	47	6	29	8	0	640	6	w/ pasta
No-Cook Tomato Sauce w/ Tapenade		600	290	12	64	33	4.5	23	4	0	840	6	w/ pasta
Grilled Bread	40												
Grilled Garlic Bread		190	60	5	26	7	1	5	0.5	0	440	1	based on 8 servings
Grilled Goat Cheese Crostini w/ Roasted Peppers		280	120	8	30	14	3.5	8	1	5	540	2	based on 8 servings
Grilled Corn, Shrimp & Chorizo Salad		700	400	21	57	45	9	29	5	60	1010	6	based on 8 servings
Mexican-Style Steaks	44												
Steak Adobo		440	300	32	1	33	12	15	1.5	105	380	1	based on 4 servings
Steak w/ Three-Chile Sauce		650	450	39	9	50	18	24	2.5	130	720	1	based on 4 servings
Steak w/ Red Onion, Wine & Port Sauce		620	350	35	7	39	18	15	1.5	130	550	0	based on 4 servings
Grilled Eggplant	48												
Grilled Eggplant		80	60	1	4	7	1	5	1	0	140	3	based on 6 servings
Garlic-Cumin Vinaigrette w/ Feta & Herbs		160	130	2	6	15	3	10	1.5	5	260	3	w/ Grilled Eggplant
Toasted-Breadcrumb Salsa Verde		180	150	1	7	17	2.5	12	2	0	260	3	w/ Grilled Eggplant
Roasted Red Pepper Relish w/ Pine Nuts & Currants		140	110	2	8	12	1.5	8	2	0	190	4	w/ Grilled Eggplant
Olive, Orange & Anchovy Vinaigrette		180	160	1	6	18	2.5	13	2	0	340	3	w/ Grilled Eggplant
Scallions	52												
Summer Corn Chowder w/ Scallions, Bacon & Potatoes		180	60	8	25	7	3	2.5	1	15	320	3	based on 6 servings
Grilled Flank Steak w/ Sesame Sauce & Grilled Scallions		520	300	39	17	34	7	16	8	65	2150	2	based on 4 servings
Pork Lo Mein w/ Seared Scallions & Shiitakes		680	310	29	61	35	7	17	8	55	1360	6	based on 4 servings
Thai Seafood Salad	56												
Thai Seafood Salad (<i>Yum Talay</i>)		200	20	31	12	2.5	0.5	0	1	205	1700	1	based on 6 servings
Peaches & Cream	58												
Peaches & Cream Dessert		350	140	2	54	15	9	4.5	0.5	55	25	2	based on 4 servings
Peaches & Cream Parfait		600	310	4	72	35	21	10	1.5	130	55	3	based on 4 servings
Peaches & Cream Shortcakes		600	330	6	63	37	23	10	1.5	125	230	2	based on 8 servings
Cream Shortcake Biscuits		280	160	4	27	18	11	5	0.5	60	190	1	based on 8 servings
Test Kitchen	62												
Pickled Cauliflower w/ Carrots & Red Bell Pepper		50	0	2	12	0	0	0	0	0	220	3	based on 4 oz. serving
Spiced Pickled Beets		60	0	2	14	0	0	0	0	0	300	2	based on 4 oz. serving
Double-Chocolate Malted Milk Shake		280	110	6	39	12	7	3.5	0.5	35	130	2	based on 2 servings
Create-Your-Own Pasta Salad w/ Grilled Eggplant		260	100	9	31	11	2	7	1.5	10	500	3	based on 6 servings
Quick & Delicious	78a												
Angel Hair Pasta w/ Cherry Tomatoes, Lemon & Tuna		400	110	22	49	13	2.5	7	2.5	10	880	5	based on 4 servings
Arugula Salad w/ Pears, Prosciutto & Aged Gouda		330	230	12	16	26	7	12	5	35	650	4	based on 4 servings
Feta & Dill Galette w/ Lemon Spinach Salad		350	270	10	9	31	13	14	2	155	690	1	based on 4 servings
Chili-Rubbed Rib-Eye w/ Corn & Green Chile Ragoût		690	420	47	22	47	22	18	3.5	185	700	4	based on 2 servings
Farmers' Market Quesadillas		660	370	22	51	42	15	16	9	60	1090	5	based on 4 servings
Summer Bouillabaisse w/ Smoky Rouille		490	230	30	29	25	3.5	9	2.5	40	480	5	based on 4 servings
Roasted Chicken Thighs w/ Late-Summer Vegetables		460	280	26	12	31	7	17	5	90	690	3	based on 4 servings
Back Cover													
Corn Sauté w/ Canadian Bacon, Potatoes & Peppers		250	130	7	27	14	5	7	1.5	25	500	4	based on 4 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional

ingredients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

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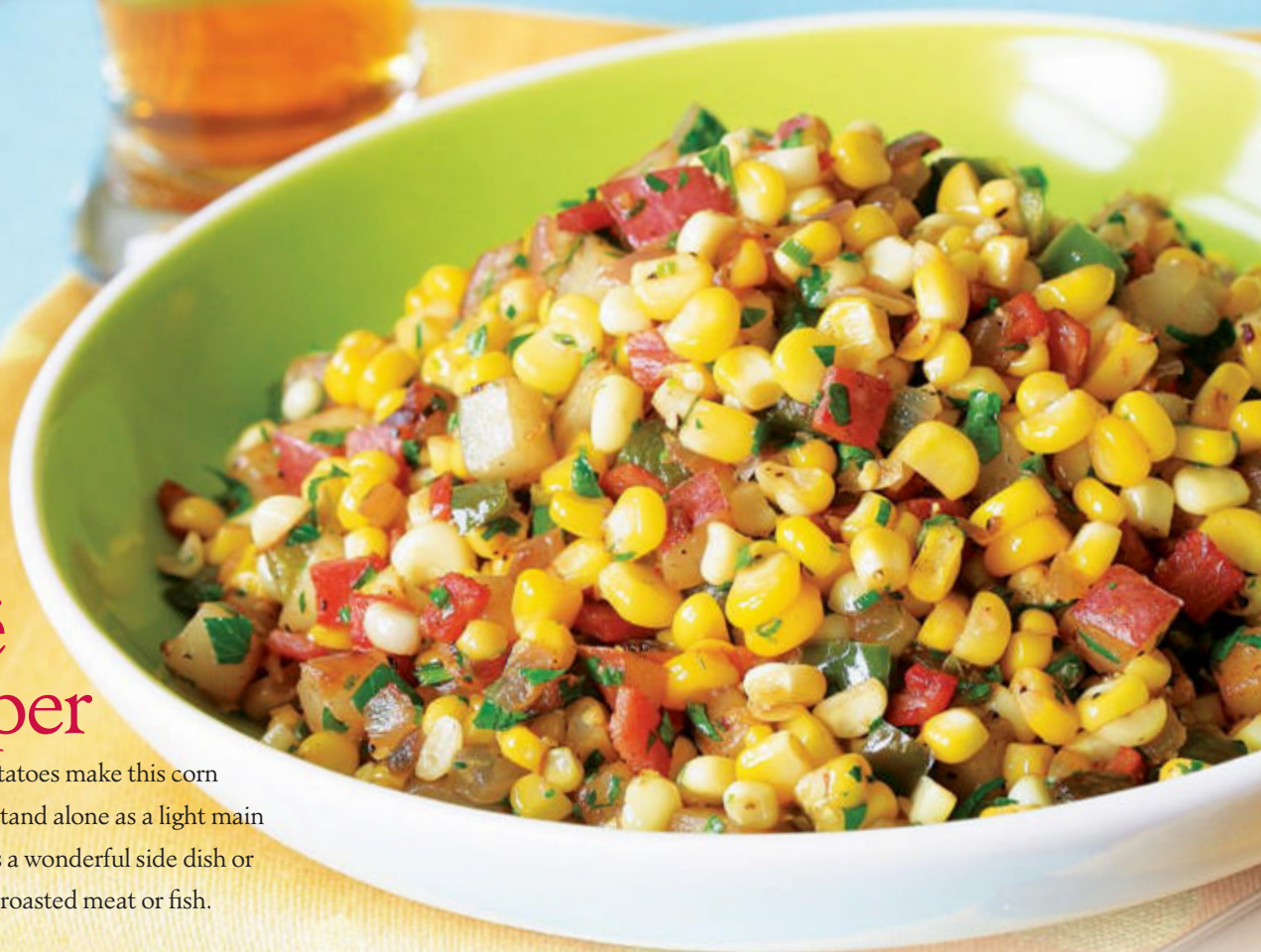
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A Sauté for Supper

Canadian bacon and potatoes make this corn sauté hearty enough to stand alone as a light main course, but it also makes a wonderful side dish or a zesty bed for grilled or roasted meat or fish.



Ingredient tip:

Made with jalapeños instead of red hot peppers, Tabasco green pepper sauce provides a milder kick than the classic sauce and a vegetal flavor reminiscent of green bell peppers. It's available in most well-stocked supermarkets.

Corn Sauté with Canadian Bacon, Potatoes & Peppers

Serves four as a side dish or two as a main course.

- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter**
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- ½ cup small-diced Canadian bacon (3 oz.)**
- 1 cup small-diced red onion (from about a 6-oz. onion)**
- 1 cup small-diced red potato (from about a 5-oz. potato)**
- ½ cup small-diced green bell pepper (from three-quarters of a 3-oz. pepper)**
- 1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**
- 2 slightly heaping cups fresh corn kernels (from about 4 medium ears)**
- 2 tsp. minced garlic (2 medium cloves)**
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 2 Tbs. thinly sliced fresh chives**
- ½ tsp. green Tabasco; more to taste**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- One-half lemon**

Melt 1 Tbs. of the butter and 1 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the Canadian bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until the bacon is brown around the edges, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels.

Add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and 1 Tbs. olive oil to the pan. Add the onion,

potato, bell pepper, and ½ tsp. of the salt. Reduce the heat to medium low, cover, and cook, stirring frequently, until the onions and peppers are well softened and the potatoes are barely tender and starting to brown, 5 to 7 minutes.

Uncover, increase the heat to medium, and add the corn, garlic, and the remaining ½ tsp. salt. Sauté, stirring frequently and scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon, until the corn is tender but still slightly toothy to the bite, 3 to 5 minutes. (The corn should be glistening, brighter in color, and somewhat shrunken in size, and the bottom of the pan will be slightly brown.)

Remove the pan from the heat, add the parsley, chives, Tabasco, a few generous grinds of pepper, and a small squeeze of lemon. Stir, let sit 2 minutes, and stir again, scraping up the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. (Moisture released from the vegetables as they sit will loosen the bits.) Fold the Canadian bacon into the dish, season to taste with more salt, pepper, or lemon juice. Serve warm.

For more corn sautés, turn to p. 34.

Susie Middleton, editor of Fine Cooking ♦

Summertime, and the cooking is easy

BY MARTHA HOLMBERG

Ripe, gorgeous summer vegetables are a treat for anyone who loves to cook; the only challenge is finding the time to cook them all. These recipes will help you with that, as they're built around the season's luscious offerings yet designed for speed, too.

Be sure to stock your pantry with high-quality partners for your vegetables: lovely extra-virgin olive oil; a good block of nutty, true Parmigiano-Reggiano; fresh, firm garlic; and fragrant spices. Also, be flexible when selecting your produce. If the recipe specifies zucchini but pattypan squash is calling you, heed the call and go with what looks best. All the recipes here can handle some improvisation. Even the Chili-Rubbed Rib-Eye Steak with Corn & Green Chile Ragoût can be made with pork chops or chicken breasts if steak isn't your thing.



Farmers' Market Quesadillas

Yields 4 quesadillas.

5 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 cup small-diced fresh, mild chiles, such as Anaheim or poblano (from about 2 large chiles)
1½ cups small-diced summer squash (from about 2 small zucchini, yellow squash, or yellow crookneck)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup fresh corn kernels (from 2 medium ears)
⅛ tsp. chipotle chile powder
1 cup diced tomato (from 2 small tomatoes)
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
Four 9-inch flour tortillas
2 cups grated sharp cheddar (8 oz.)
Sour cream for serving (optional)

Heat the oven to 200°F. Fit a cooling rack over a baking sheet and put in the oven.

Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add the chiles and cook, stirring, until soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the squash, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until the squash softens and starts to brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the corn and chipotle powder and cook 2 minutes more. Spoon into a bowl, let cool for a few minutes, and then fold in the tomato, cilantro, and lime

juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside ¾ cup of the mixture.

Lay several layers of paper towel on a work surface. Wipe out the skillet, put it over medium-high heat, and add 1 Tbs. of the oil. When it's hot, put one tortilla in the pan. Quickly distribute ½ cup of the cheese evenly over the tortilla and about a quarter of the remaining vegetable mixture over half the tortilla. When the underside of the tortilla is browned, use tongs to fold the cheese-only side over the vegetable side. Lay the quesadilla on the paper towels, blot for a few seconds, and then move it to the rack in the oven to keep warm while you repeat with the remaining oil and tortillas. Cut the quesadillas into wedges and serve immediately with the reserved vegetable mixture and sour cream.

Note: Chipotles are dried smoked jalapeños, and in any form they add an intriguing depth to dishes. McCormick makes ground chipotle, and The Spice Hunter sells a crushed chipotle, which would be a fine substitute in this recipe; just add a bit more than you would of the ground.



Summer Bouillabaisse with Smoky Rouille

Serves four.

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for the sauce
1½ Tbs. chopped garlic, plus ½ tsp. finely grated or minced garlic
2 lb. ripe tomatoes, cored and large diced (about 4½ cups)
1 cup dry white wine
1 tsp. sweet smoked paprika (Spanish pimentón)
¼ cup mayonnaise
Kosher salt
One 14-oz. can low-salt chicken broth (1¾ cups)
1 large pinch saffron
1 lb. halibut, cod, or other firm white fish, cut into 1-inch chunks
2 cups fresh corn kernels (from 4 medium ears)
Freshly ground black pepper
1 to 2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, for garnish (optional)

In a 5- to 6-qt. soup pot or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the 1½ Tbs. chopped garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes and wine, increase the heat to medium high (if necessary), and simmer vigorously until the tomatoes are broken down and the mixture is slightly soupy, about 15 minutes.

While the tomatoes are cooking, whisk the ½ tsp. grated garlic, paprika, and mayonnaise in a small bowl. Whisk in a little olive oil and enough cool water to make a creamy, pourable sauce. Taste and add salt if you like.

Add the broth and saffron to the tomato mixture and simmer to slightly reduce the broth and concentrate the flavors, 5 minutes. Add the fish and simmer until it's opaque throughout, 3 to 5 minutes more. Stir in the corn. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Serve in large bowls with a big drizzle of the sauce on top and a generous sprinkle of parsley, if using.

Variation: To dress this up for entertaining, add ½ lb. peeled medium or large shrimp and ½ lb. Manila clams or mussels. Wash the shellfish well before adding and use only the tightly closed shells. Simmer until the shells open.

Tip: You can make this soup ahead except for adding the fish, which you should do at the last minute.



Feta & Dill Galette with Lemony Spinach Salad

Serves four.

2 large eggs
⅓ cup crème fraîche or heavy cream
2 Tbs. chopped fresh dill, plus ½ cup loosely packed dill sprigs for the salad (optional)
1 tsp. lightly packed, finely grated lemon zest
½ tsp. kosher salt; more for the salad
Freshly ground black pepper
1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
1 cup crumbled feta (about 4 oz.); I like Valbreso and Mt. Vikos brands
4 small handfuls baby spinach (about 3 oz.), washed and dried, large stems removed
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, crème fraîche or cream, chopped dill, lemon zest, salt, and about 10 grinds of pepper.

On a lightly floured surface, gently roll out the puff pastry until it measures about 11 by 13 inches. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment or a silicone baking mat. Lay the pastry on the baking sheet, wet the edges with water, and

fold over a ¾-inch border, mitering the corners for neatness. Distribute the feta evenly within the border, and then carefully pour the egg mixture over the cheese, taking care that it doesn't slosh onto the border. Carefully transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake until the pastry is puffed and brown on the border and the underside, and the filling is golden brown, 18 to 20 minutes.

Slide the galette off the pan and onto a rack to cool until still warm but not hot. Move the galette to a cutting board and cut into four rectangles, so that each piece gets some border. Put the four pieces on plates.

In a large bowl, toss the spinach and dill sprigs (if using) with the olive oil and lemon juice until evenly coated. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, and more lemon juice to taste. Arrange a handful of salad on each piece of galette and serve immediately.

Note: Thaw puff pastry in the refrigerator overnight or all day while you're at work. Or thaw at room temperature for at least 45 minutes (less if your kitchen is quite warm).



Roasted Chicken Thighs with Late-Summer Vegetables & Pan Sauce

Serves three to four.

6 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (2½ to 3 lb.)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
½ lb. green beans, stem ends trimmed (2 cups)
10 oz. cherry or grape tomatoes (2 cups)
One-half large sweet onion (like Vidalia or Walla Walla) or red onion, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
½ cup pitted Niçoise or Kalamata olives
2 large cloves garlic, sliced about ⅛ inch thick
¾ cup dry white wine
1 tsp. unsalted butter (optional)
½ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves, sliced into ½-inch strips

Position two racks near the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. Heat a 10- to 11-inch heavy, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Generously season the chicken on both sides with salt and pepper. Pour 1 Tbs. of the oil into the hot skillet and swirl to coat. Arrange the chicken thighs skin side down in the pan and cook until the skin is golden brown, about 7 minutes. Turn the chicken over. If a lot of fat has accumulated, carefully spoon it off and discard.

While the chicken browns, toss the beans, tomatoes, onion, olives, and garlic in a large bowl with the remaining 2 Tbs. oil. Season with ¾ tsp. salt and several grinds of pepper and spread the vegetables on a rimmed baking sheet.

Put the skillet of chicken and the baking sheet with the vegetables in the oven, with the chicken on the higher rack. Roast the chicken until a thermometer inserted in the center of a thigh registers 170°F, 18 to 20 minutes. Continue to roast the vegetables until very soft and beginning to brown, 8 to 12 minutes more.

Meanwhile, remove the skillet from the oven and transfer the chicken to a plate. Spoon off and discard as much fat as possible from the chicken juices, add the wine, set over high heat, and boil until reduced to about ¼ cup sauce, 4 to 6 minutes; it should be syrupy and concentrated in flavor. Swirl in the butter, if using.

Remove the vegetables from the oven and toss them with the basil. Divide the vegetables among four plates. Arrange one or two chicken thighs on the vegetables and drizzle with the pan sauce. Serve immediately.



Arugula Salad with Pears, Prosciutto & Aged Gouda

Serves four.

2 Tbs. white-wine vinegar
½ tsp. Dijon mustard
¼ tsp. kosher salt
⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
5 to 6 oz. arugula, any large stems removed, leaves washed and dried (6 loosely packed cups)
2 medium ripe pears, peeled if you like, cored, and cut into 1-inch chunks
4 thin slices prosciutto, cut crosswise into ½-inch-wide ribbons
3 oz. aged Gouda, cut into 2-inch-long sticks (1 cup)
1 oz. walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped (¼ cup)

In a small bowl, whisk the vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in the oil.

In a large salad or mixing bowl, toss the arugula and the pears with half of the dressing. Divide among four plates, scatter the prosciutto

and cheese on top of each salad, and drizzle with a little of the remaining dressing. Sprinkle on the nuts and serve immediately.

Tip: Gouda that's been aged a couple of years takes on a rich, almost toffee-like character; the older it is, the drier and more intense the flavor becomes. (Don't worry if it falls apart when you cut it.) I like Old Amsterdam brand. For more on aged Gouda, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 62. You could also use a good Comté, Gruyère, or Parmigiano-Reggiano.



Chili-Rubbed Rib-Eye Steak with Corn & Green Chile Ragoût

Serves two.

- 1 tsp. chili powder**
- 1 tsp. ground coriander**
- 1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**
- Two 8-oz. boneless beef rib-eye steaks (about ¾ inch thick)**
- 2 tsp. canola or other vegetable oil**
- 1 small poblano or other mildly hot fresh chile (Anaheim or Italian frying pepper), seeded and cut into ¼-inch dice (about ½ cup)**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 generous cup fresh corn kernels (from 2 medium ears)**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- 1 Tbs. minced oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes (from 2 medium tomato halves)**
- 1 Tbs. fresh lime juice**

In a small bowl, mix the chili powder, coriander, and salt. Rub the mixture on the steaks.

Heat the oil in a 10- to 11-inch cast-iron or other heavy skillet over high heat until very hot. Add the steaks, reduce the heat to medium high, and cook until they are well browned and done to your liking, about 3 minutes per side for medium rare. Transfer to a plate and cover loosely to keep warm.

Add the chile to the pan, season with salt and pepper, and cook over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until softened and starting to brown, about 2 minutes. Add the corn and continue to cook until it's slightly browned, 1 to 2 minutes more. Add the cream and boil until it has reduced and the mixture is thick, 1 to 2 minutes.

Remove from the heat, stir in the sun-dried tomato, lime juice, and the accumulated juices from the steak. Taste and add more salt and black pepper, if you like. Serve the rib-eyes whole or slice them and arrange on plates. Serve immediately, with the corn ragoût on top or alongside.

Variation: Rib-eye steaks are tender, juicy, and cook well in a frying pan, but you could also use New York strip or skirt steaks.

Tip: Poblanos vary a lot in spiciness, so taste yours before you add it to the pan and hold back a bit if it's too hot. If you want more heat, add a minced jalapeño along with the poblano.

Angel Hair Pasta with Sautéed Cherry Tomatoes, Lemon & Tuna

Serves three to four.

- Kosher salt**
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 4 cups cherry or grape tomatoes (about 1½ lb.; a mix of colors, if possible)**
- 1 large clove garlic, minced**
- One 6-oz. can light tuna in oil, drained and separated into chunks**
- 2 Tbs. minced jarred pepperoncini (about 4 medium peppers, stemmed and seeded)**
- 1 Tbs. lightly chopped capers**
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice**
- 1 tsp. cold unsalted butter**
- ½ tsp. packed, finely grated lemon zest**
- 8 oz. dried angel hair pasta**
- 3 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a boil over high heat. Meanwhile, in an 11- to 12-inch skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat until very hot. Add the tomatoes (be careful because the oil and juice can spatter) and cook until they begin to collapse and their juices run and start to thicken, 6 to 10 minutes. (If you have

big, stubborn tomatoes, you may need to crush them a bit with a spatula or pierce them with a knife.) Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds.

Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the tuna, pepperoncini, capers, lemon juice, butter, and lemon zest. Season the sauce to taste with salt and keep it warm while you cook the pasta.

Cook the pasta in the boiling water according to package directions. Drain well, arrange in individual pasta bowls, and top with the sauce and the parsley.

Tip: For a real treat, try one of the imported Spanish tunas (Ortiz brand, in particular), which are fairly expensive but very delicious.

Martha Holmberg, the former publisher and editor in chief of Fine Cooking, is the food editor of The Oregonian newspaper in Portland. ♦